THE GREAT TURKISH STATES

THAT SHAPED HISTORY



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THAT SHAPED HISTORY

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YTB

FOREWORD



In an age where the world changes with a bewildering speed and the circulation of information grows apace, it is certain that nations succeeding in building bridges between the past and the future will proceed more swiftly. The story of our nation, extending from our fatherland Turkestan to our motherland Anatolia, and our five millenia in pursuit of civilization have left us an extremely important legacy and experience in terms of the resolve and determination needed along this process and likewise in setting our aim and direction. Now more than ever do we need qualified studies and general reference works in every field of humanities such as history, literature, geography, philosophy and the history of science. This work titled The Great Turkish States That Shaped History, prepared for that purpose, carries great significance, in that it is the history of the Turks, one of most ancient and rooted nations in the world, and that it is the story of the geographies and lands into where the major and minor branches as well as the shade of the grand Turkish tree, with its roots in Ötüken, extend. This is at the same time the opus of the endeavor to grapt Turkish history as a whole and to reunite the seemingly-disconnected links on historic-geographical and temporospatial plane. This work, consisting of articles on the sixteen Turkish states existing in the Presidential Seal of the Republic of Türkiye and written by experts in their respective fields, sheds light on our nation's contribution to political, cultural, economic and social history and to world civilization.

It is an indisputable truth that as the world rapidly changes and gradually becomes more competetive, countries without a perspective for future will not be able to play a globally influential role. We take rightful pride in our civilization shaped around the deep-rooted past, capable

states, the vast geography over which we ruled, the concept of justice which we gifted to humanity, the all-embracing toleration, developed bureaucracy, refined and rich cultural heritage, splendid monuments, and the magnificant scientific institutions and libraries serving as inventory to all these. But at the same time, this pride also assigns us the tast to work hard and rise above the contemporary civilization.

The century of Türkiye vision claims, in this very context, a revival incicated by the phrase a future that is rooted in the past, and to serve our country and all humanity. It is at the same time a great ideal and goal based on justice and compassion, a thrust to overcome ill luck and widen the horizon. In this regard, I congratulate all scholars and the Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities who have contributed to this study, which is authored in the context of contact with the roots and which I believe will reinforce our hope for the future, our strength, and our self-confidence.

Recep Tayyip ERDOĞAN
The President of the Republic of Türkiye

FOREWORD

The Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Türkiye is dedicated to formulating national, cultural, and historical policies, protecting this heritage, and ensuring its transmission to subsequent generations. Our objective extends beyond the reinforcement of Türkiye's extensive historical and cultural heritage; it also encompasses its international dissemination. The conveyance of this legacy from the past to the present has been facilitated by the endorsement of various projects related to history, culture, and the arts.

Turkish history has exerted a considerable influence on the trajectory of global history and has facilitated the development of prominent civilizations. Extending from the steppes of Turkestan to Anatolia, and from China to central Europe, Turkish identity has exerted significant influence politically, socially, culturally, militarily, and socially on the populations with whom it has coexisted. This historical narrative has contributed to the evolution of global civilizations.

The Turks founded significant states including the Great Hun Empire, the Göktürk Khaganate, the Khazar Khaganate, the Karakhanids, the Great Seljuk Empire, and the Ottoman Empire, governing extensive territories. The capacity of the Turks to establish states exemplifies their resilience, sovereignty, and determination to maintain an independent existence. Historically, the Turks administered a variety of populations across multiple regions, exerting a positive impact on their way of life including military proficiencies. This influence rapidly permeated the domains of science, art, law, and diplomacy.

The Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities (YTB) diligently endeavours to reinforce the identity, culture, and connections of a diaspora of roughly seven million Turks worldwide. Encompassing a diverse geographic region from the Balkans to Africa, and the Caucasus to the Middle East, YTB provides social, cultural, and economic support to our akin and sibling communities. In accordance with this mission, YTB awards scholarships to thousands of students and engages in extensive cultural initiatives. This publication entitled *The Great Turkish States That Shaped History* serves as a significant illustration of these endeavours.

Written by our distinguished scholars, this publication serves as a tangible testament to the historical memory of the Turkish nation. We express our sincere appreciation to our President, Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, for his kind acceptance of the role of patron for this significant endeavour. I extend my congratulations to the scholars who dedicated their efforts to the completion of this project and convey my heartfelt appreciation to Abdulhadi Turus, the President of the Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities (YTB), along with his committed team, for realising such a significant undertaking.

Republic of Türkiye, Minister for Culture and Tourism
Mehmet Nuri ERSOY

FOREWORD

The sixteen stars featured on the Presidential Seal represent the Turkish nation's deep-rooted legacy of statehood and civilization, shaped over centuries across diverse geographies and carried forward to the present day. Geographies, dynasties, and political circumstances have changed; yet the will to live independently, the capacity for organization, the idea of justice, and the desire to build a strong future have endured through different periods of Turkish history to the present day. In this respect, our history is not so much the story of disconnected states as a great historical journey that has continued through the ages.

This journey, extending from Ötüken to Transoxiana, from Khorasan to Anatolia and the Balkans, has given rise to a rich civilization. Thus, a great legacy has emerged, encompassing everything from tradition and state organization to intellectual and scholarly life, from cities to architectural works, from trade routes to the experience of enabling different communities to live together. The Turks went beyond establishing a political presence in the regions they ruled; through the institutions they established, the ideas they developed, and the works they produced, they played important roles in shaping world history. Today, this profound historical experience also lies at the heart of the shared memory that draws the different regions of the Turkic world closer together.

As the Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities, we approach our relations with the Turkic world with a view to carrying this deep-rooted historical and cultural legacy forward to future generations. Across a vast geography extending from Turkistan to the Balkans, from the Caucasus to different regions of the world, we contribute to further strengthening our historical and cultural ties under the conditions of the present day through initiatives that preserve our shared heritage with our kin and related communities and strengthen interaction among young people, academics, and institutions.

The vision of the President of the Republic of Türkiye, H.E. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, which draws strength from our shared history and culture, deepens multidimensional cooperation, and brings the Turkic world together around a shared future, has provided important direction to the steps taken in this field. The Organisation of Turkic States has also become one of the most important structures through which this historical affinity has been transformed into mutual trust, solidarity, and concrete forms of cooperation. Our work, "Great Turkic States That Shaped History," presents, within a coherent academic framework, the historical and civilizational legacy that underpins the Turkic world as it shapes its future together today. The presentation of this work to the heads of state and government at the 13th Ordinary Summit of the Organisation of Turkic States carries special significance. The work comprehensively addresses the legacy extending from the sixteen great Turkic states represented on the Presidential Seal to the Republic of Türkiye, allowing the historical memory that underpins the shared future of the Turkic world to accompany, in scholarly form, this important gathering where that shared future is discussed.

This great experience, accumulated over centuries, becomes memory when documented through scholarship, and becomes the future when understood by new generations. I believe that "Great Turkic States That Shaped History" will contribute to a better understanding of the integrity of Turkish history and its place in world history, to the transmission of this great heritage to new generations on an authentic and scholarly basis, and to the strengthening of the shared horizon of the Turkic world. I would like to thank our esteemed academics who contributed to the preparation of this work, Prof. Dr. Okan Yeşilot, who undertook its editorship, and our colleagues. I also extend my gratitude to the President of the Republic of Türkiye, H.E. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, for taking this work under his auspices.

Abdulhadi TURUS
President of the Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities

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“When the blue sky above and the dark earth below were created, between them was mankind that came into being. Upon mankind did my forefathers, Bumin Khagan and Istemi Khagan, ascend the throne. They took hold of the realm of the Turkic people, and established order through their laws...”

(Kül Tigin Inscription)

INTRODUCTION

The twenty-first century, now past its first quarter, is moving with unrelenting speed towards worldwide momentous upheavals in political and economic terms. In the course of such disruption, building a solid gateway between past and future, and maintaining a steadfast perspective, necessitates well-reasoned analysis. Understanding and properly interpreting the historical and cultural foundations that shape us is not optional; it is essential. A history built upon accurate knowledge is vital for the future of our region and beyond.

It is from this perspective that we present this work devoted to the sixteen great Turkic states represented in the Presidential Seal of the Republic of Türkiye: the Great Hun State, Western Hun State, European Hun State, Hephthalite (White Hun) State, Göktürk State, Avar State, Khazar State, Uyghur State, Karakhanid State, Ghaznavid State, Great Seljuk State, Khwarazmian State, Golden Horde State, Timurid State, Baburid State, and the Ottoman State — along with their modern successor, the Republic of Türkiye. We believe that such a comprehensive study of our political and cultural legacy will meaningfully contribute to a holistic understanding of our past.

Spanning a vast geography stretching from the Sea of Japan to the Baltic, and from the Kazan-South Siberia axis to India, the Turks have been a pivotal force in the political history of Eurasia. The view that one cannot write world history without including the Turks is by no means an exaggeration.

Historically, the Turks have constituted one of the most influential factors in determining the course of Eurasia's fate. The legacy that extends from Ötüken to Vienna represents an essential component of global historical narratives.

Born under the shadow of the Ötüken, Altai, Sayan, Tian Shan, and the Ural Mountains, grown up along the rivers of Orkhon, Yenisei, Selenga, Irtysh, Talas, Syr Darya, Amu Darya, Volga, and Ural, Turkic peoples emerged as central actors on the stage of world history from the 10th century onward. Known by many titles, "Melik-i Turan," "Emir of Turkestan," "Shah of Iran," "Shah of India," and "Padishah of the World"—they ruled over a considerable part of the Old World.

The Turkish homeland that is today Turkestan today covers a broad expanse: from Mongolia and southern Siberia to much of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, northern Afghanistan, Khorasan, Tibet, East Turkestan, and Gansu. Far richer than a narrow narrative of nomadic survival, the history of the Turks encompasses deep-rooted social and cultural achievements. Far from being aimless warrior groups, they forged values and institutions—yurt, il, töre, kut, alp—and made lasting contributions to mythology, belief systems, material culture, language, and the arts. Through their organizational character and horsemanship, they became the primary representatives of the Steppe Civilization during the Age of Mounted Peoples. From Anav to Pazyryk, from Esik kurgans to Orkhon inscriptions, the cultural artefacts of Proto-Turks / Turks reveal a civilization of remarkable depth and complexity.

Once mounted herders of the steppes, the Turks came to govern immense swathes of land—from the Caspian Sea to the Great Wall of China, and from India to the Balkans and Central Europe. They became one of the foremost "history-making" nations, shaping regions far beyond their demographic reach. They founded sophisticated administrative and cultural systems in cities such as İstanbul, Samarkand, Bukhara, Damascus, Cairo, Delhi, Kazan, Tabriz, Baghdad, Jerusalem, Belgrade, and many more. In the 16th century, the Safavids, Baburids, and Ottomans represented what may be called the "Turkish Century" politically, militarily, and culturally. Iran, India, the Balkans and the Caucasus were ruled by Turks for centuries.

Our ancestors maintained peace in regions now torn by conflict and pioneered coexistence among diverse communities. Contrary to Ibn Khaldun's theory that tribal nomads could sustain only short-lived political structures,

the Turks proved capable of establishing enduring states with complex institutions.

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc in the early 1990s, newly independent Turkish states, along with a global Turkish population nearing 300 million, have inherited historical experience, a young demographic profile, and rich geopolitical resources, which altogether offer immense possibilities. In this information age, unfortunately, the production of foundational academic works, encyclopedias, atlases, lexicons, has lagged behind. Orientalists and foreign Turkologists have filled the void, making contributions but also allowing for certain misuses such as introducing inaccurate or skewed terminology. For instance, while the Mamluks called their state "Devletü't-Türkiyye" (Turkish State) and the Karakhanids referred to theirs as "Türk Hakanlığı" (Turkish Khaganate), the Baburids (Timurids) of India have long been mischaracterized as Mughals (i.e. 'Mongols') based on tenuous claims. However, we do not have to continue using, instead of the originals, the intentional or unintentional substitutes. This work avoids such distortions, adhering as closely as possible to accurate historical notions.

If we limit our vision of the Turkic world solely to modern sovereign states of Türkiye, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, we fail to capture its true breadth and richness. Millions of Turks live across the globe under diverse namings: Tatars, Bashkirs, Chuvash, Kumyks, Nogais, Karapapaks, Karakalpaks, Ahıska Turks, Gagauz, Crimean Tatars, Yakuts, Uyghurs, Tuvans, Qashqai, and others.

Turks, having founded long-running and strong states across Asia, Europe, and Africa, i.e. basis of the Old World, made significant and enduring contributions to the fields of science, culture, and the arts. The Turkic world, characterized by its extensive legacy and diverse traditions of coexistence, provides a distinctive human experience. To reveal this heritage is to enhance our comprehension of humanity itself.

Starting in the 14th century, the Turks emerged as significant contributors to cultural exchange. They maintained an overall and long-term atmosphere

After adapting to a sedentary lifestyle, the Turks made lasting contributions to science, culture, and the arts, helping to shape the course of human civilization.

The Turkic world, with its historical legacy spread across huge geographies, offers a unique insight in fostering coexistence among diverse cultures. To explore this legacy is to understand the past.

of peace called "pax" among various ethnic and religious groups, and transported not only commodities but also concepts and traditions along the Silk and Spice Roads. They had close relations and cultural dealings with Chinese, Tibetian, Mongolian, Indian, Iranian and Caucasian communities as well as with Greek, Slavic, Germanic, Finno-Ugric, and Siberian peoples. Turkish languages, dialects, cultural practices, artistic expressions, and literary traditions thrived within this extensive cultural ecosystem. Turkish had spread from Far East and western China to eastern Europe and Anatolia, and on the north-south axis from Volga-Ural and southwestern Siberia to eastern Turkistan, northern Afghanistan, northern Iran and the Caucasus. Turkish language and the culture shaped around it grew on this rich synthesis of civilizations and influenced communities and languages in far-away geographies.

Epics of Ergenekon, Manas, Grey Wolf, Oghuz Kagan, Creation, Köroğlu, Stories of Dede Korkut, works and compendia such as Divan-ı Hikmet, Kutadgu Bilig, Muhakemetü'l-Lügateyn, Divanu Lugati't-Turk, Atabetü'l-Hakayık, Divan of Yunus Emre, Danişmend-name, Saltuk-name and many other oral, scientific and literary works demonstrate only a part of the background in question. Farabi, Ibn Sina, Biruni, Khwarezmi, Mavlana Jalaladdin Rumi, Ali Kuşçu, Kadızade Rumi of Bursa, Piri Reis, Takıyyüdin the Observer, Katib Çelebi, and scientiest and intellectuals whose names would add up to pages if we kept on writing, all represent this heritage.

In the centuries that followed, during the periods of the Karakhanids, Ghaznavids, Seljuks, Baburids, Safavids, Ottomans, and the Turkish Republic, Turks consistently produced significant works in the fields of literature, art, and culture. On horseback, conquests may be made, but a strong administration, a functional bureaucracy, or institutions of science and culture may not be established. In other words, civilization cannot be founded on horseback. Turks contributed significantly to the history of mankind with the schools, observatories, hospitals, and extensive libraries that they founded, and the innumerable endowments that they instituted for the functionality of these foundations. They exhibited extremely successful cases of managing human resources most efficiently under the names of devşirme and millet system, by uniting people from diverse ethnic and religious origins along the axis of common future

and prosperity" yazılacak. To the repertoire of humanity in the field of fine arts, they gifted countless monumental buildings, first and foremost Taj Mahal, Twin-Minaret Medrese, Divriği Great Mosque and Hospital, Chehel Sutoun Palace, the Khan's Palace in Bahhchysarai, Süleymaniye and Selimiye, which now belong to the world cultural heritage in Turan, Iran, India, Anatolia, Caucasus and the Balkans.

Turkology, traditionally situated within the frameworks of Orientalism and Sinology, must now establish its independence. It is imperative that we articulate our own history following stringent academic standards and guarantee that our scholarship is both accessible and translated into commonly used languages. This study—organized around the sixteen Turkish states represented in the Presidential Seal—seeks to mitigate these issues. Its ultimate objective is to accurately situate Turkish history within the broader context of world history and to reinstate it to its deserved position among the community of civilized nations.

Prof. Dr. Okan YEŞİLOT
Editor

The Great Hun State



Source: Atilla Karataş Collection



THE GREAT HUN STATE

(209 BC-48 AD)

Hayrettin İhsan ERKOÇ*

Introduction

The Great Hun Empire is extensively acknowledged as the first significant Turkic state in historical records and the first empire founded on the Eurasian steppes. Owing to its efficiently organized administrative framework, it established a benchmark for later Turkic states. The individuals who established the state are called the Asian Huns or the Great Huns. Historical sources indicate that the Huns constituted a tribal confederation comprising of multiple clans. Rulers generally originated from the Luandi 攣鞮 clan, while the subsequent three clans of highest nobility included the Huyan 呼衍, the Lan 蘭, and thereafter, the Xubu 須卜.[1] According to Chinese accounts, Hun rulers were referred to as Chanyu 單于 (pronounced Chanyü),[2] whereas their consorts were referred to as Yanzhi 閼氏 (pronounced Yen-

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1 Hanshu 94A.3751; Shiji 110.2890-2891 (Shiji does not mention 史記 Luandi tribe and the rulers' origin from this tribe). In Hou Hanshu, which mentions the Southern Huns of the later period, the name of the tribe from which the rulers of 後漢書 originated is written as Xulianti 虛連題, and the order of other noble tribes is given as four tribes as Huyan, Xubu, Qiulin 丘林 and Lan (Hou Hanshu 89.2944-2945). Unfortunately, the original forms of these clan names have not yet been deciphered.

2 There are various debates about the etymology and original form of the title. Certain scholars attribute the name to Old Turkic titles yabğu and tarqan, or the Middle Mongolian title daruġa (Christopher P. Atwood, "The Qai, the Khongai, and the Names of the Xiōngnú,"

tsı).[3] The term Chanyu reflects the notion of expansiveness, implying that the rulers were as boundless as the heavens. The complete imperial honourific title was Chengli Gutu Chanyu 撐犁孤塗單于. As narrated in the Hanshu 漢書 (Book of Han), the term Chengli Gutu 撐犁孤塗 is equivalent to the title Tianzi 天子 (Son of Heaven), which was used by Chinese emperors.[4] However, modern scholarship is inclined to take the view that the original form of Chengli Gutu is probably the Old Turkic phrase Teŋri Ḳut (Heavenly Grace or Divine Authority).[5]

The Huns: Resources and Studies

Since no written accounts from the Huns have survived to the present day, knowledge regarding them is predominantly obtained from the chronicles compiled by their southern counterparts, the Chinese, along with archaeological finds. The earliest extensive description of the Huns is found in the Shiji 史記 (Records of the Grand Historian), authored by Sima Qian 司馬遷 (145–86 BC) and finalized in 91 BC. This study examines events spanning from the initial epochs of

International Journal of Eurasian Studies, no. 2 (2015): 39, 60; Mehmet Ölmez, "Notes on the Huns and Their Language," in Interdisciplinary Hun Studies, ed. Csilla Balogh and Hakan Aydemir, Paradigma Akademi Press, Çanakkale, 2023, 71–72; Talat Tekin, The Language of the Huns, ed. Mehmet Ölmez, BilgeSu Publishing, Ankara, 2023, 18). The character 單 used in the composition of this title can be pronounced as dan, shan, or chan in contemporary Chinese; consequently, some scholars have interpreted the title as Shanyu (e.g., Records of the Grand Historian of China: Han Dynasty, trans. Burton Watson, vol. II, Columbia University Press, New York, 1968, 134; Hyun Jin Kim, The Huns, Routledge, Abingdon/New York, 2016, 11; Hyun Jin Kim, Hunlar, trans. Hakan Herdem, Gumbel Yayınevi, Ankara, 2020, 15). Nevertheless, the accurate pronunciation of the title is Chanyu. In older Turkic literature, it was occasionally rendered as Tanjou (or Chen-ju), based on the eighteenth-century interpretation by Joseph de Guignes, and as Tanju in the Turkish translation by Hüseyin Cahit (Yalçın) (Joseph de Guignes, Histoire générale des Huns, des Turcs, des Mogols, et des autres Tartares occidentaux, &c. [General History of the Huns, Turks, Mongols, and Other Western Tartars], Desaint & Saillant, Paris, 1756, vol. I/I, 215–219; vol. I/II, 1–144; Turkish ed. Hunların, Türklerin, Moğolların ve Daha Sâir Batı Tatarlarının Tarih-i Umûmîsi, vol. I, trans. H. Cahit, ed. E. Kılınç, Ötüken Neşriyat, Istanbul, 2018, 113–233). Consequently, it has sometimes appeared in Turkish sources as Tanju or Tanhu (İbrahim Kafesoğlu, Türk Millî Kültürü, Ötüken Publications, Istanbul, 2002.

3 The origin of the title is thought to be Old Turkic ebçi ("wife, wife, wife, lady") (Tekin, op. cit., p.22). See also on the subject. Gülnar Kara, *According to Historical Records and Han Dynasty Historical Biyographies, Asian Huns in Chinese Sources*, Doğu Kütüphanesi, Istanbul 2021, p.57.

4 *Hanshu* 94A.3749, 3751

5 Konuralp Ercilasun, *Türk Tarihinde Asya Hunları: Birinci Hâkimiyet Dönemi*, Dergâh Yayınları, Istanbul 2019, p.223-230; Tekin, *op.cit.*, p.12-13, 15-16.



Chinese history to the era contemporaneous with the author's own lifetime. In contrast to basic chronological records, it uses comprehensive resources and elaborated narratives. Chapter 110 (Juan 卷, referred to as "scroll" or "volume") is entitled Xiongnu Liezhuan 匈奴列傳 ("Biography of the Xiongnu" or "Treatise on the Huns"). It examines the origins, culture, and organizational framework of the Huns, emphasizing Sino-Hun interactions and delineating their political trajectory up to 102 BC.[6] Moreover, supplementary information regarding the Huns can be found in the Basic Annals (Benji 本紀) and within the sections called Monographs and Biographies (Liezhuan 列傳). These sections include biographical accounts of numerous Chinese officials and generals, along with scholarly studies on other groups bordering China. Certain sections of the Account of the Huns and associated biographies within the Shiji have been rendered into Turkish by Pulat Otkan and Gülnar Kara. Two extensively employed English translations of the Shiji—both often referenced by scholars of Turkic history—have been undertaken by teams directed by Burton Watson and William H. Nienhauser, Jr. In addition to the aforementioned work, several English translations of the work are available. Furthermore, the account of the Huns in the Shiji was translated into German by J. J. de Groot, with his work subsequently being rendered into Turkish by G. Ahmetcan Asena. Additionally, Édouard Chavannes completed a full French translation of the Shiji.[7] Another authoritative resource regarding the Huns is the Hanshu 漢書 (Book of Han), the official dynastic history of the Han dynasty 漢, which governed China from 202 BC to 220 CE. In contrast to the Shiji, the Hanshu focuses on the historical narrative of a particular dynasty and thus established a standard for future dynastic chronicles. The foundational framework of the work was established by Ban Biao (3–54 CE), subsequently augmented by his sons Ban Gu (32–92 CE) and Ban Chao (32–102 CE), and ultimately finalized in 111 CE by Ban Gu's daughter, Ban Zhao (45–117 CE).

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6 *Shiji* 110.2879-2920.

7 Édouard Chavannes, *Les Mémoires historiques de Se-ma Ts'ien*, 7 Vol, Adrien Maisonneuve, Paris 1967-1969; *Die Hunnen der vorchristlichenzeit. Chinesische Urkunden zur Geschichte Asiens. Erster Teil*, trans. J. J. de Groot, Walter de Gruyter & Co., Berlin ve Le- ipzig 1921; J. M. de Groot ve G. Ahmetcan Asena, *2500 Yıllık Çin İmparatorluk Belgele- rinde Hunlar ve Türkistan*, Pan Publishers, Istanbul 2000; Kara, *op.cit.*; Pulat Otkan, *Tarihçi- nin Kayıtları'na (Shi Ji) Göre Hunlar*, Türkiye İş Bankası Publications, Istanbul 2018; *Records of the Grand Historian of China: Qin Dynasty*, trans. Burton Watson, Columbia University Press, New York 1968; *Records of the Grand Historian of China: Han Dynasty*, I-II, trans. Burton Watson, Columbia University Press, New York 1968; *The Grand Scribe's Records*, C.IX, ed. William H. Nienhauser, Jr., Indiana University Press, Bloomington ve Indiana- polis 1995-2006-2008-2010-2016-2018-2019-2022.



THE GREAT HUN STATE

The Account of the Huns (Xiongnu Liezhuan 匈奴列傳) in the Hanshu comprises of two two parts, chapters 94A and 94B. It furnishes valuable information on the origins, culture, and political history of the Huns up to 23 BC.[8] Additional references to the Huns are located in the Basic Annals (Benji 本紀), Monographs, and Biographies (Liezhuan 列傳) sections. The narrative framework closely mirrors that of the Shiji, however, there are significant distinctions. The account of the Huns in the Hanshu has been rendered into Turkish by Ayşe Onat, Konuralp Ercilasun, and Sema Orsoy. The Western Regions section and selected biographies of Chinese statesmen and generals that include references to the Huns were translated into Turkish by Ayşe Onat, whereas the majority of Hun-related passages in the biographies were translated by Gülnar Kara. Sections of the Western Regions and associated biographies were translated into English by Hulsewé. The accounts pertaining to the Huns and the Western Regions were initially translated into German by J. J. J. de Groot and then further translated into Turkish by G. Ahmetcan Asena. Nonetheless, a comprehensive English translation of the Hanshu's chapters pertaining to the Hun has yet to be produced. Translations of the Western Regions segment into Western languages have been assembled by Chris M. Dorn'eich.[9]

The primary source pertaining to the last phase of the Great Hun Empire is the Hou Hanshu 後漢書 (Book of the Later Han), authored by Fan Ye 范曄 (398–445 CE) and completed in 445. As a successor to the Hanshu, this text offers glimpses into the political histories and cultures of the Southern and Northern Huns in chapter 89, entitled "Account of the Southern Huns." Further references to the Huns can be located within the sections devoted to Basic Annals, Monographs, and Biographies. In comparison to the Shiji and the Hanshu, the Hou Hanshu provides reduced information regarding the Huns and remains untranslated.[10]

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8 *Hanshu* 94A.3743-3791, 94B.3795-3834.

9 *Die Hunnen der vorchristlichen zeit*; Chris M. Dorn'eich, *Ban Gu. Annalen der Älteren Han. Die Westländer im chinesischen Original und westlichen Übersetzungen*, Berlin 2003; Groot-Asena, *op.cit,.* A. F. P. Hulsewé, *China in Central Asia: The Early Stage: 125 B.C.-A.D. 23: An Annotated Translation of Chapters 61 and 96 of the History of the Former Han Dynasty*, E. J. Brill, Leiden 1979; Kara, *op.cit.*; Ayşe Onat, *Çin Kaynaklarında Türkler: Han Hanedanı Tarihinde "Batı Bölgeleri"*, Türk Tarih Kurumu Publications, Ankara 2012; Ayşe Onat, Sema Orsoy ve Konuralp Ercilasun, *Çin Kaynaklarında Türkler: Han Hanedanlığı Tarihi Bölüm 94A/B: Hsiung-nu (Hun) Monografisi (Annotated Text Transcription)*, Türk Tarih Kurumu Publications, Ankara 2004.

10 Hou Hanshu 89.2939-2971. Sources such as Tongdian 通典 (Comprehensive Institutions), a historical encyclopaedia written by Du You 杜佑 (735-812) in 801, and Wenxian Tongkao 文獻通考 (Comprehensive Examination of Literature), compiled by Ma Duanlin 馬



Another source that carries immense value for Hun history is the Zizhi Tongjian 資治通鑑 (*Comprehensive Mirror to Aid in Government*), written by Sima Guang (1019–1086) and finished in 1085. While not recognized as an official dynastic chronicle, this semi-official encyclopedic compilation covers a substantial span of Chinese history in chronological sequence and is regarded as one of the most extensive historical sources. As it incorporates numerous texts and documents that have not endured to the present, it continues to be regarded as one of the most significant sources. Within Chinese historical archives, it is considered the most precise in chronological terms. The Zizhi Tongjian includes data pertaining to the political history of the Huns, and these accounts have been rendered into English by Joseph Yap.[11]

While lacking the detailed information found in the previously cited sources, another work that provides valuable insights into Hun history and culture is the Yantie Lun (Discourses on Salt and Iron), authored by Huan Kuan 桓寬 in the 1st century BC. This text compiles accounts of the discussions conducted by imperial officials at court in 81 BC, after the demise of Emperor Wu 武, regarding his strategy of implementing state monopolies on the production of salt and iron to fund military operations against the Xiongnu. Although the Yantie Lun touches upon Sino-Hun conflicts, its main focus is to provide insights into the Huns' lifestyle, cultural customs, and characteristics. The Turkish rendition of the segments pertaining to the Huns in the Yantie Lun can be found in a work by Kürşat Yıldırım.[12]

Modern scholarship has authored independent, monographic-style studies concentrating on the history and culture of the Great Hun Empire. Prominent researchers include Aleksandr Natanovich Bernshtam, Bahaeddin Ögel, Lev Nikolaevich Gumilyov (Gumilëv), Nicola Di Cosmo, Saadettin Yağmur Gömeç, Tilla Deniz Baykuzu, Konuralp Ercilasun, Murat Öztürk, Ahmet Taşağıl, and Bryan K. Miller. Another significant reference work on the Huns is the *Encyclopaedia*

端臨 (1245-1322) in 1319, have Hun Chapters, However, they are almost exact copies of the Hun Chapters of the Shiji and Hanshu and do not contain much original information (Tongdian 194.5302-5332, 195.5333-5364; Wenxian Tongkao 340.8-30, 341.1-40).

11 Joseph P. Yap, *Wars with the Xiongnu: A Translation from Zizhi Tongjian*, Author House, Bloomington 2009.

12 Kürşat Yıldırım, "Hun Tarihi Kaynağı Olarak Yan Tie Lun", Türk Dünyası Araştırmaları, 220 (2016), p.51-62.

Xiongnu, collaboratively compiled by Mongolian scholars.[13] Moreover, scholars such as Joseph de Guignes, Franz Altheim, Wolfram Eberhard, René Grousset, İbrahim Kafesoğlu, Yü Ying-shih, Peter B. Golden, Ahmet Taşağıl, Varis Abdurrahman Çakan, Tilla Deniz Baykuzu, and Hyun Jin Kim have tackled topics relating to the Great Hun Empire in their works on Turkic peoples and the Huns.[14]

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13 Tilla Deniz Baykuzu, *Asya Hun İmparatorluğu*, Kömen Publications, Konya 2012; A. N. Bernştam, Oçerk istorii gunnov, İzdatel'stvo Leningradskogo gosudarstvennogo ordena Lenina universiteta imeni A. A. Jdanova, Leningrad 1951; Nicola Di Cosmo, Ancient China and Its Enemies: The Rise of Nomadic Power in East Asian History, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2002; Nicola Di Cosmo, Antik Çin ve Düşmanları: Doğu Asya Tarihinde Göçebe Gücün Yükselişi, trans. Gaye Yavuzcan, Kronik Publishers, Istanbul 2022; Encyclopae- dia Xiongnu, ed. Tsagaan Turbat, trans. Ts. Ochirkhuyag vd, Institute of Archaeology, Mon- golian Academy of Sciences, Ulaanbaatar 2013; Ercilasun, age.; Saadettin Yağmur Gömeç, Türk-Hun Tarihi, Berikan Publishers, Ankara 2018; L. N. Gumilev, İstoriya narodı hunnu, C.I-II, İnstitut Dİ-DİK, 1998; Lev Nikolayeviç Gumilëv, Hunlar, trans. D. Ahsen Batur, Se- lenge Publications, Istanbul 2002; Bryan Kristopher Miller, Power Politics in the Xiongnu Em- pire, (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis), University of Pennsylvania East Asian Languages and Civilizations, 2009; Bryan K. Miller, Xiongnu: The World's First Nomadic Empire, Oxford University Press, New York 2024; Bahaeddin Ögel, Büyük Hun İmparatorluğu Tarihi, Vol. II, Kültür Bakanlığı Publications, Ankara 1981; Murat Öztürk, Asya Hunlarında İktisadi Hayat, (Doctoral Thesis), Fırat Üniversitesi SBE, Tarih Anabilim Dalı, Elazığ 2013; Murat Öztürk, Asya Hunlarında Tarım ve Yerleşik Hayat, Hiperyayın, Istanbul 2019; Ahmet Taşağıl, Boz- kırların İlk İmparatorluğu Hunlar, Yeditepe Publishers, Istanbul 2020.

14 Franz Altheim, *Geschichte der Hunnen. Erster Band. Von den Anfängen bis zum Einbruch in Europa*, Walter de Gruyter & Co, Berlin 1969; Tilla Deniz Baykuzu, "Asya Hunları", *İslam Öncesi Türk Tarihi ve Kültürü*, ed. M. Bilal Çelik, Nobel Publishers, Ankara 2020, p.21-41; Tilla Deniz Baykuzu, "Asya Hunları, Akhunlar, Tabgaçlar", *Ötüken'den Kırım'a Türk Dünyası Tarihi*, ed. A. Kanlıdere ve İ. Kemaloğlu, Ötüken Neşriyat, Istanbul 2020, s.39-59; Varis Abdurrahman Çakan, *Orta Asya Türk Tarihine Giriş: Vol.I-İslâm'a Kadar*, A Kitap, Ankara 2015, p.117-181; W. Eberhard, *Çin'in Şimal Komşuları: Bir Kaynak Kitabı*, trans. N. Uluğtuğ, Türk Tarih Kurumu Publications, Ankara 1996, p.76-77; Peter B. Golden, *An Introduction to the History of the Turkic Peoples: Ethnogenesis and State-Formation in Medieval and Early Modern Eurasia and the Middle East*, Otto Harrassowitz, Wiesba- den 1992, s.57-68; Peter B. Golden, *Türk Halkları Tarihine Giriş: Ortaçağ ve Erken Ye- niçağ'da Avrasya ve Ortadoğu'da Etnik Yapı ve Devlet Oluşumu*, trans. O. Karatay, Ötüken Publications, Istanbul 2017, p.71-81; René Grousset, *The Empire of the Steppes: A History of Central Asia*, trans. N. Walford, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick 1970, p.19-29, 32-48, 53-60; René Grousset, *Bozkır İmparatorluğu: Attila/Cengiz Han/Timur*, trans. M. Re- şat Uzmen, Ötüken Publications, Istanbul 1999, p.38-47, 51-57, 59-65, 69-76; de Guignes, *Histoire générale…*, Vol.I/I, s.215-224, C.I/II, p.1-271; de Guignes, *Hunların, Türklerin…*, Vol.I, p.113-350; Kafesoğlu, *op.cit.*, p.57-70; Hyun, *The Huns*, p.10-30; Hyun, *Hunlar*, p.13-38; Ahmet Taşağıl, *Kök Tengri'nin Çocukları (Avrasya Bozkırlarında İslam Öncesi Türk Tarihi)*, Bilge Kültür Sanat, Istanbul 2013, p.51-96; a. mlf, *Bozkırın Kağanlıkları: Hunlar, Tabgaçlar, Göktürkler, Uygurlar*, Kronik Kitap, Istanbul 2018, p.25-73; Yü Ying-shih, "Hsiung-nu



The Origins and Titles of the Huns

A variety of theories regarding the ancestral heritage and origins of the Huns exist in both Chinese sources and archaeological findings. Various Chinese texts from differing periods cite numerous communities residing in northern and northwestern China as the progenitors of the Huns. Both these sources and contemporary scholars demonstrate that the ancestors of the Huns are identified as the Hun Yi 混夷/Kun Yi 昆夷, Xunyu 獯鬻, and Xianyun 玁狁 during the Zhou dynasty period in China (c. 1045–256 BC). It seems that these terms are not distinct ethnonyms but instead represent earlier versions of the title "Hun" as documented in Chinese sources.[15] Both in terms of archaeological finds and genetically speaking, the Huns are thought to be a continuation of the Late Bronze Age Ulaanzuukh (Улаанзуух) Culture in Mongolia (c. 1450–1000 BC) and its successor, the Late Bronze–Iron Age Slab-Grave (Dörvöljinbulsh Дөрвөлжинбулш) Culture (c. 1300–300 BC).[16] Although the Huns originated in the region north of China, specifically in modern-day Mongolia, as per Chinese accounts, their ancestry is traced to the Xia dynasty of China (c. 2100–1600 BC). Chinese sources indicate that Chunwei 淳維, regarded as the ancestors of the Huns, was affiliated with the Xia dynasty and migrated northward at the onset of the Shang dynasty period (c. 1600–1045

(Şyunğ-nu)", trans. S. Esenbel, *Erken İç Asya Tarihi*, ed. Denis Sinor, İletişim Publications, Istanbul 2003, p.167-207; Yü Ying-shih, "The Hsiung-nu", The Cambridge History of Early Inner Asia, ed. Denis Sinor, Cambridge University Press, 2008, p.118-149.

15 Hanshu 70.3017, 94A.3743-3747; Shiji 110.2879-2885; Hayrettin İhsan Erkoç, "Altay Halkları ve Erken Çin Etkileşimi", Kökler: Yay Çeken Kavimlerin Şafağı: Dil, Arkeoloji, Tarih, Antropoloji ve Etnografya Işığında Altay Halklarının Kökeni, ed. S. Çirkin, Vol. II (Arkeoloji ve Tarih), Ötüken Publications, Istanbul 2021, s.167-172. The character Yi 夷 in the names Hun Yi 混夷 and Kun Yi 昆夷 is not actually phonetically part of these names, but is one of the terms used in Chinese for "foreign". In this case, the characters Hun 混 and Kun 昆 in these names are the oldest known recorded forms of the name Hun.

16 Emel Esin, *İslâmiyetten Önceki Türk Kültür Târîhi ve İslâma Giriş*, Edebiyat Fakültesi Matbaası, Istanbul 1978, p.7-8, 31-32, 35, 37, 39, 41-42, 51, 192-193; Choongwon Jeong et.al., "A Dynamic 6,000-Year Genetic History of Eurasia's Eastern Steppe", *Cell*, S.183 (2020), p.890-904; Christine Lee ve Zhang Linhu, "Xiongnu Population History in Rela- tion to China, Manchuria, and the Western Regions", *Xiongnu Archaeology: Multidiscipli- nary Perspectives of the First Steppe Empire in Inner Asia*, ed. Ursula Brosseder ve Brian K. Miller, Rheinische-Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn, 2011, s.193-200; Juhyeon Lee vd., "Genetic Population Structure of the Xiongnu Empire at Imperial and Local Scales", *Science Advances*, IX/15 (2023), p.1-14; Alexander Savelyev ve Choongwon Jeong, "Early Nomads of the Eastern Steppe and their Tentative Connections in the West", *Evolutionary Human Sciences*, 2 (2020), e20, s.1-17. There is also a view that traces the origins of the Huns to the archaeological culture that created bronze artefacts in the Ordos region (Atwood, *op.cit*., p.41).

BC). Another hypothesis suggests that the Huns originated from Xunyu 獯粥, the offspring of the final Xia dynasty king Jie 桀, who escaped to the north and embraced a nomadic existence. The assertion that the Huns descended from the dynasty that initially governed China is not supported by historical evidence. On the contrary, the above is viewed as a diplomatic gesture made by Chinese historians living during the Hun period within the context of Hun-Chinese relations.[17]

The Huns are more commonly referred to in Chinese sources as Xiongnu 匈奴 (pronounced Shyoŋnu)[18]; This name first surfaces in historical sources in 318 BC in reference to a treaty established among competing states in China. The Chinese employed a variety of terms to designate adjacent foreign populations, among which "Hu 胡" was occasionally utilized to refer to the Huns. In specific Roman sources composed in Greek from the 2nd century BC to the 1st century CE, the term Phrounoi (Φροῦνοι, commonly referred to as "Fruns") is often interpreted as being equivalent to the Xiongnu found in Chinese texts. In Sogdian texts, the title for the Hun is rendered as xwn (Ḫūn).[19] The original form, etymology, and origin of the name Hun

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17 *Hanshu* 94A.3743; *Shiji* 110.2879-2880; Erkoç, "Altay Halkları…", p.161.

18 Since Chinese has a pictograph-based writing system rather than an alphabet-based writing system, different systems are used to write Chinese words in Latin letters. Xiongnu is the spelling of this name in the Pinyin 拼音 System, which was developed by the Chinese themselves and is now universally accepted. In the previously more common Anglo-Saxon Wade-Gi- les System, the name is written as Hsiung-nu. Chinese was pronounced very differently in historical times than it is today, and Xiongnu is the Mandarin Chinese pronunciation of these characters. Sinologists divide the historical periods of Chinese into Old Chinese (up to the 4th century AD) and Middle Chinese (4th-13th centuries AD). Unfortunately, the pronunciation of the characters 匈奴 in Old Chinese during the Hun period has not been fully established, but many Sinologists have attempted to reconstruct the pronunciation of later Middle Chinese, for which there is much more data. According to one of them, Edwin G. Pulleyblank, the characters 匈奴 were pronounced xuawŋ-nɔ in Early Middle Chinese.(Edwin G. Pulleyblank, *Lexicon of Reconstructed Pronunciation in Early Middle Chinese, Late Middle Chinese, and Early Mandarin*, UBC Press, Vancouver 1991, p.346, 227). William Baxter reconstructed the Middle Chinese pronunciation of these characters as xjowng-nu (Paul W. Kroll, *A Student's Dictionary of Classical and Medieval Chinese*, Brill, Leiden/Boston 2017, p.511, 328). The special phonetic letters used here, j, ŋ and x, are pronounced y, nasal n and ḫ (wheezy h) respectively. Since the name Hun is usually written as Xiongnu with two syllables in Chinese, the Huns are now called Hunnu Хуннну in Russian literature and Hünnü Хүннүү in Mongolian literature.

19 Atwood, *op.cit*., p.38-39; Di Cosmo, *Ancient China and Its Enemies*, p.163; Di Cosmo, *An- tik Çin ve Düşmanları*, p.211-212; Golden, *An Introduction…*, p.57-58; Golden, *Türk Halk- ları*, p.72; Hyun, *The Huns*, p.4-5; Hyun, *Hunlar*, p.6-7; Kafesoğlu, *op.cit.*, p.58-59; Başak Kuzakçı, "Etno-Dil Bilimsel Yaklaşım: Soğd Belgelerinde Hun Adı ve Köklerine Dair



are subject to a divergence of opinion, and there is no consensus among researchers. Among the dominant theories, include linking the name to the Old Turkic words Kün, meaning "tribe, people," or Ḳun, which has the meaning of "strength, power." Various scholars have put forward Iranian etymologies for the term Hun. Furthermore, a theory that links the name to the Ongi River (Ongi gol Онги гол) in Mongolia, contending that its primordial form was Ḫoŋai, exists. Among these theories, the one most extensively acknowledged is Kün, a perspective endorsed by the author of this text.[20]

The ethnic affiliations and languages of the Huns remain a subject of extensive scholarly debate. In academic discourse, the Huns are predominantly classified as Turkic, nevertheless, alternative perspectives propose that they were Mongolic, Iranian, Yeniseian, or characterized by ethnic diversity.[21] The explanation for the diversity of perspectives on this subject lies in the fact that no written records directly attributable to the Huns have been found to date. The extant information regarding the language employed by the Huns is limited exclusively to names, titles, and a selection of common vocabulary documented in Chinese sources. Some of the vocabulary that has been documented and is associated with the Hunnic language is derived from Turkic origins. However, the original forms of all Hunnic terms within Chinese texts remain incompletely deciphered, requiring further examination.[22] However, there exist indirect indications within Chinese sources suggesting that the Huns communicated in a Turkic language. For instance, these sources indicate that during the 4th–6th centuries CE, the Turkic groups residing in Mongolia and Northern China, referred to by the Chinese as the "High Carts" (Gaoche 高車), communicated in the same language as the Northern Hun population recognized as the Yueban 悅般. The

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Argümanlar", *Genel Türk Tarihi Araştırmaları ve Günümüzdeki Durumu*, ed. O. Doğan ve H. Demirci, Selenge Publications, Istanbul 2023, p212-228.

[20] Atwood, *op.cit*., p.35-63; Christopher I. Beckwith, *The Scythian Empire: Central Eurasia and the Birth of the Classical Age from Persia to China*, Princeton University Press, Princeton/Oxford 2023, p.50, 179-182, 202-204, 333; Christopher I. Beckwith, *İskitler: Tarihleri, Kültürleri ve Dünyaya Etkileri*, trans. O. Saygılı, Kronik Books, Istanbul 2024, p.85, 229-231, 255-257, 395-396; Golden, *An Introduction*, p.58; Golden, *Türk Halkları*, p.73; Kafesoğlu, *op.cit.*, p.59.

[21] Beckwith, *The Scythian Empire*, p.180-183; Beckwith, *İskitler*, p.229-232; Di Cosmo, *Ancient China and Its Enemies*, p.163-166; Di Cosmo, *Antik Çin ve Düşmanları*, p.211-215; Golden, *An Introduction*, p.58-59; Golden, *Türk Halkları*, p.73-74; Kafesoğlu, *op.cit.*, p.58-59.

[22] Golden, *An Introduction*, p.58-59; Golden, *Türk Halkları*, p.73-74; Kafesoğlu, *op.cit.*, p.59; Ölmez, *op.cit.*, p.71; Tekin, *op.cit.*, p.9-10..

High Carts are accepted as the ancestors of the Uighurs and the Nine Oghuz who followed, and who are unequivocally identified as speakers of Turkic languages. Consequently, this source suggests that the Huns communicated in a Turkic language.[23]

Moreover, the Jinshu 晉書 contains a sentence that was documented and attributed to the language used by the Jie 羯 tribe of the late Huns. Despite the fact that this theory was not accepted by some researchers, it was however accepted as Turkic by many scholars, including the current author.[24] In addition, recent research that has focused on genetics, has concluded that the Huns are genetically distinct from Mongolic, Iranian, and Yeniseian peoples, but are most closely related to Turkic populations.[25] Consequently, notwithstanding the absence of the ethnonym "Turk" prior to the Göktürks, it ought to be acknowledged that the principal tribes of the Huns were Turkic in nature and communicated in a Turkic language. Nonetheless, it is critical to recognise that following the incorporation of various steppe populations under their authority, the Huns developed into a multiethnic empire. Genetic investigations further indicate that during this time, the Huns interacted with diverse populations residing in Siberia, China, and Turkestan.[26]

The Emergence and Rise of the Great Hun Empire

The precise timing of the Huns' state formation remains unclear due to the scarcity of written sources. Nevertheless, substantial evidence suggesting that, prior to the 3rd century BC, at least some of the Huns resided in the areas of Inner Mongolia, Ordos, and Northern China, engaged in incursions into Chinese territory exists. It is acknowledged that Hun rulers adopted the title Chanyu from the latter part of the 3rd century BC, yet there is a distinct lack of source material concerning the identities of the initial Hun rulers. [27]

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23 *Beishi* 97.3220; *Weishu* 102.2268.

24 *Jinshu* 95.2486; Hyun, *The Huns*, p.5; Hyun, *Hunlar*, p.7; Ölmez, *op.cit*., p.72; Tekin, *op.cit.*, p.59-77.

25 Peter de Barros Damgaard et.al., "137 Ancient Human Genomes from Across the Eurasian Steppes", *Nature*, No.557 (2018), p.369-374; Juhyeon Lee et.al., "Medieval Genomes from Eastern Mongolia Share a Stable Genetic Profile Over a Millennium", *Human Population Genetics and Genomics*, IV/1 (2024), p.1-22.

26 Jeong et.al., op.cit., p.890-904; Lee et.al., *ibid*., 1-14; Savelyev-Jeong, *op.cit*., p.1-17.

27 *Hanshu* 94A.3747-3748; *Shiji* 81.2449-2450, 110.2885-2886.



Touman Chanyu 頭曼單于 (Unknown - approximately 209 BC)

Touman (Tuman?) Chanyu was the first historically documented Hun ruler.[28] However, the year he came to the throne is unknown. It seems that Touman was not an effective ruler, as his reign was marked by a considerable defeat at the hands of China. In the era preceding the emergence of the Huns, China was divided into competing states: Nonetheless, the nation was coercively unified under the Qin Dynasty (221–206 BC) in 221 BC. Following the unification of China, the Qin Shihuang (reign 221–210 BC) dispatched his general Meng Tian on a military campaign against the Huns in 215 BC. The general killed Touman and subsequently seized the Ordos region the following year, an area recognized in Chinese sources as Henan 河南, which translates to "South of the [Yellow] River." Ordos, situated south of the Yellow River (Huanghe 黃河), was conducive to both animal husbandry and agriculture owing to its rich pastures and abundant water resources. Furthermore, owing to its geographic closeness to China, the Huns employed Ordos as an advanced operational base for their military campaigns and incursions into Chinese territory. Thus, the Ordos region has consistently held historical importance. After the relinquishment of Ordos, the Huns withdrew towards

[28] De Guignes, He translated the name Touman 頭曼 into Latin letters as Teou-man, and since Hüseyin Cahit, who translated him, translated it as Teo-man, the name became Teoman in Turkish literature (de Guignes, Histoire générale, C.I/1, p.215, C.I/II, p.20-22; de Guignes, Huns, Turks, C.I, p.130-132). Gömeç argued that the Old Turkic origin of Touman was Tümen ("Ten Thousand") or Tuman ("Duman") and considered the first possibility more likely (Gömeç, age., p.60). Christopher I. Beckwith, on the other hand, claimed that the name was originally an Iranian name in the form of Devămană, meaning "Godly Wise" (Be- ckwith, The Scythian Empire, pp.187-189; Beckwith, Scythians, pp.238-239). According to the author of these lines, Touman is most probably an Old Turkic name in the form of Tuman ("Duman"), although this is not definitive.

the north, and in the territories they abandoned, the Chinese emperor erected the renowned Great Wall of China[29] (Changcheng 長城, "Long Wall").[30]

The fact that Modu 冒頓 (possibly Baġatur?)[31] Touman's son overthrew and killed his father, is narrated in Chinese sources in semi-legendary fashion. As Ögel pointed out, the narrative is not alike the historiographical style of the Chinese, and

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29 This wall has two functions. The first one is to protect the northern regions of China from Hun raids. The other function is to close the border and prevent the people of other Chinese states conquered by the Qin Dynasty from fleeing to the north. Until the embankment was built, thousands of Chinese fled from the Qin Dynasty, which had a very oppressive rule, to the Hun State where they could live freely in the north. During the Han Dynasty, slaves and outlaws living in the north always wanted to escape to the free Hun country, and some of them succeeded. (*Hanshu* 94B.3804-3805; Hayrettin İhsan Erkoç, *General Li Jing'in Askerî Düşüncesi ve Doğu Göktürk Kağanlığı'nın Çöküşü*, (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis), Hacettepe Üniversitesi SBE, Tarih Anabilim Dalı, Ankara 2015, p.180). Another little known issue about the Great Wall is that the Great Wall built by Qin Shihuang is confused with the present Great Wall. The current Great Wall was built during the Ming 明 Dynasty (1368-1644) against the Mo- gols and stone was used in its construction. The Qin period Great Wall, on the other hand, was built of mudbrick and very little of it has survived to the present day. Also, the theory that the Great Wall of China is visible even from the moon is not true and is an exaggeration by analogy, as written in a letter by William Stukeley in 1754 and in a book by Henry Norman in 1895.

30 *Hanshu* 49.2283, 64A.2800-2801, 2803, 94A.3748, 94B.3813, 3824, 96A.3872; *Shiji* 6.253, 280, 88.2565-2566, 110.2886, 112.2954-2955, 2961; *Zizhi Tongjian* 7.242-243.

31 The origin of the name Modu 冒頓 is disputed. De Guignes transliterated the name into Latin as Me-te and Me-té, and since Hüseyin Cahit transliterated it as Mete in his translation, the name has become known as Mete in Turkish literature. (de Guignes, Histoire générale, C.I/I, p.215, C.I /II, p.22-24, 27-36; de Guignes, Hunların, Türklerin, C.I, p.131-134, 136-144). 冒頓 Although the exact reading of these characters in Old Chinese during the Hun period has not been determined, Pulleyblank reads them as mək- twənʰ in Early Middle Chinese and Baxter reads them as mawH-twonH in Middle Chinese. (Kroll, op.cit., p.297, 97; Pulleyblank, op.cit., p.217, 84). According to Friedrich Hirth, the old pronunciation of these characters may refer to Baġtur, an older two-syllable form of the Old Turkic title Baġatur (modern Turkish Bahadır) (Tekin, op.cit., p.78). This view was later accepted among researchers (Hyun, The Huns, s.17; Hyun, Hunlar, p.23; Taşağıl, Bozkırların İlk İmparatorluğu Hunlar, p.40). Kafesoglu suggested that the Old Turkic origin of Modu may be Beğ-tun "Bey noble", and also quoted an opinion linking this name to the title Yabġu (Kafe- soğlu, op.cit., p.60). Gömeç claimed that the Old Turkic origin of Modu was Börü Tonga or Börü Tokta (Gömeç, op.cit., p.60). Beckwith, on the other hand, suggested that the name was originally an Iranian name, Bagătvănă "Empowered by God" (Beckwith, The Scythian Empire, p.189-190; Beckwith, İskitler, p.239-241). There is a divergence of opinion regarding how the characters 冒頓 should be read in Chinese. In Chinese, the character 冒 is read as both mo and mao, and the character 頓 is read as both du and dun, so the name 冒頓 has been read differently by researchers as Modu, Modun and Maodun. According to an annotation in the Shiji, the reading of 冒 in the case of the name of this Hun ruler is the same as that of mo 墨 (*Shiji* 110.2889), thus it is not correct to read this name as Maodun. According to



Sima Qian, the author of Shiji, most probably heard this story orally during his lifetime from the Huns. In line with the tale, Modu was the son of Touman's first wife and his chosen heir, however Touman later decided to declare the son from his second wife[32] as his heir and sent Modu as a hostage to his powerful western neighbors, the Yuezhis 月氏 (pronounced Yüecı).[33] Thereafter, Touman initiated an unplanned attack on the Yuezhis, with the aim of eliminating Modu. Nonetheless, Modu came by a swift horse and rejoined his father. Admiring his son's fortitude and valor, Touman provided him with ten thousand troops, in the form of a cavalry regiment. Modu subsequently made the whistling arrow and initiated rigorous training for his soldiers, establishing specific targets and instructing them to engage, declaring that any failure to comply would result in execution. The targets were various animals encountered during a hunt, his beloved horse, his favored wife, and ultimately his father's horse. Indeed, the soldiers who exhibited hesitation in firing upon the initial three targets were promptly executed, thereby ensuring that when the fourth target appeared, all soldiers discharged their weapons without delay. While engaged in a hunting excursion with his father, Modu discharged his whistling arrow at him, and at the same moment, his soldiers concurrently killed Touman through a barrage of arrows. Following the coup, Modu executed his stepmother, stepbrother, and all officials who exhibited disloyalty, thereby solidifying his authority.[34] Modern scholarship takes the view that due to Touman's defeat in

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Pulleyblank, this character was read as mək in Early Middle Chinese, and according to Baxter as mok in Middle Chinese (Kroll, *op.cit.*, p.312, Pulleyblank, *op.cit.*, p.218).

32 According to the general opinion in Türkiye, this wife of Touman was Chinese, but no information exists in the sources regarding her ethnicity.

33 They are generally thought to be of Indo-European origin, but are more commonly known as Yüe-i-s in Turkish literature. (Kafesoğlu, *op.cit.*, p.466).

34 *Hanshu* 94A.3748-3749; *Shiji* 99.2719, 110.2887-2888. The allocation of ten thousand cavalries to Modu by his father approximately in 209 BC and his intensive training of them under strict discipline has, as proposed by Hüseyin Nihal Atsız, been recognized as the seminal event in the establishment of the Turkish Armed Forces. 1 Nevertheless, it seems that a military structure was in place among the Xiongnu before this time. Furthermore, in institutional terms, the contemporary Turkish Armed Forces can be traced to the Asâkir-i Mansûre-i Muhammediye army founded by Ottoman Sultan Mahmud II (r. 1808–1839) in 1826. Another prevalent misconception about Modu is his purported role as the originator of the decimal (base-ten) military system. Chinese sources that narrate his life, do not explicitly assert that the decimal system was implemented by Modu himself. Instead, the portions of these sources that outline the state organization and military framework of the Xiongnu according to the decimal system seem to emerge solely after Modu's ascension to the throne. This has prompted subsequent scholars to deduce that the decimal system was established by Modu. (*Hanshu* 94A.3751; *Shiji* 110.2890-2891). However, the decimal system was used long before the Huns in China during the Zhou Dynasty and in the Persian Empire; there are strong suggestions that the Zhou Dynasty, which

China, his reputation among the Huns diminished, and consequently he was rendered an easy target and killed around 209 BC[35] by his son Modu.[36]

Modu Chanyu 冒頓單于 (209 BC- approximately 174 BC)

The most preeminent ruler of The Great Hun Empire is thought to be Modu Chanyu. After eradicating his rivals by killing his own father and supporters to take the throne, he began to subjugate various Turkic, Mongolic, and Indo-European groups that were neighbours to the Huns. The first group targeted by Modu was the mighty Eastern Hu (Dong Hu 東胡) located to the east of the Huns.[37] The campaign launched against them around 209 BC and the motivations behind its commencement are recounted in Chinese sources using a semi-legendary approach purportedly derived from oral accounts received from the Huns. As per this narrative, the Eastern Hu, capitalizing on Modu's youth upon his ascension, attempted to challenge his authority by successively requesting his father's horse and one of his wives. While

was the first to use the decimal system, was of Turkic origin or was heavily influenced by the Turkic steppe in its early period. (Erkoç, "Altay Halkları", p.164-166).

35 Although the date of Modu's murder of Touman and him ascending the Hun throne is generally accepted as 209 BC in the literature, the exact date is not furnished in Chinese sources. According to Shiji, Hanshu and Zizhi Tongjian, ten-odd years after Touman's retreat to the north, Meng Tian died and rebellions against the Qin Dynasty broke out, while the Huns gradually grew stronger and began to move southwards again towards the old frontiers. Modu's murder of his father is told after this information is given (*Hanshu* 94A.3748-3749; *Shiji* 110.2887-2888; *Zizhi Tongjian* 11.371). The defeat of Touman by Meng Tian took place in 215-214 BC, whereas he died in 210 BC (*Shiji* 88.2569-2570; *Zizhi Tongjian* 7.251); As will be discussed below, it was Modu who recaptured Ordos from the Chinese, so the information given in the sources about the Huns' strengthening and moving south again describes the Modu period, not the Touman period. Since Modu's killing of Touman is described in these sources after the death of Meng Tian, it is the first time, starting from de Guignes (de Guignes, *Histoire générale…*, Vol.I Part I, p.215. This part of the work, in which a chronological table is given, is not included in the Turkish translation, while in the main text de Guignes gives the date as 210 BC when referring to Touman, who was at the head of the Huns when they retreated to the North. Refer too de Guignes, *Histoire générale…*, Vol.I/II, p.21; de Guignes, *Hunların, Türklerin*, Vol.I, p.130) Modern scholarship have accepted the year of Modu's accession to the throne as 209 BC. Zizhi Tongjian records Modu's murder of his father, ascension to the throne, conquest of his neighbours and reconquest of Ordos in 201 BC, but states that these events took place in previous years. (*Zizhi Tongjian* 11.371-373).

36 Nicola Di Cosmo, "State Formation and Periodization in Inner Asian History", *Journal of World History*, X/1 (1999), p.16.

37 Earlier studies on the history of Inner Asia argued that the people were Tungus or a mixture of Mongol-Tungus (Gömeç, *op.cit.*, p.56, 72; Kafesoğlu, *op.cit.*, p.60, 236; Taşağıl, *Kök Tengri'nin Çocukları*, p.54), However, later research has revealed that they were a Pre-Mongolian people and the ancestors of all later Mongolian peoples.



state officials convened at the Hun assembly expressed a desire to declare war following each demand, Modu declared that he would not reject these requests from his neighbors and assented to the requests of the Eastern Hu. The ruler of Eastern Hu, surmising that Modu held apprehension towards them, advanced westward with their army to the border and sought a desolate region situated between the two states, likely located in what is now part of the Gobi Desert. During the assembly of the Hun, certain officials proposed the relinquishment of this ostensibly valueless territory; however, Modu asserted that land constituted the cornerstone of the state (guo 國) and ordered the execution of those officials who advocated for its cession. Subsequently, Modu promptly initiated a campaign, announcing that all remaining Hun soldiers would face execution. Consequently, the Huns initiated an unanticipated assault on the Eastern Hu, who were unprepared for such aggression, ultimately prevailing in their conflict. The Eastern Hu sought refuge in two distinct mountains and embraced the names of these mountains, Serbi (Xianbei/Xianbi 鮮卑) and Wuhuan 烏桓, as identifiers for their groups, ultimately falling under the dominion of the Huns.[38]

Modu's next objective, following the successful conclusion of his initial campaign, was the Yuezhis, who resided to the west of the Huns around 203 BC. Subsequent to their defeat, the majority of the Yuezhis were compelled to flee their ancestral lands in the Gansu 甘肅 province and migrate westward toward the area surrounding the Tian Shan Mountains. Subsequent to this triumph, Modu Chanyu regained control of Ordos, an area previously ceded to the Chinese by his father, and thereafter subdued the territories of the Loufan 樓煩 and Baiyang 白羊 (White Sheep) chieftains in northern China.

Later on, he assumed control of numerous groups located to the north of the Huns, including the Hunyu 渾庾/渾窳, Qushe 屈射, Tegrek (Dingling 丁零), Kyrgyz (Gekun 鬲昆/隔昆), and Xinli 薪犁/新犁, who lived in the region of present-day southern Siberia. Therefore, many Turkic peoples came under his rule[39], and through these conquests, the Great Hun Empire truly became a steppe empire.[40]

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38 Hanshu 94A.3750; Hou Hanshu 90.2979, 2985; Shiji 110.2889; Zizhi Tongjian 11.371-733; These sources record that the Eastern Hu dispatched envoys to Modu with demands, and that the subsequent Hun military campaign occurred shortly after Modu's accession to the throne ((Hanshu 94A.3750; Shiji 110.2889; Zizhi Tongjian 11.371-733).

39 In Turkish historiography, Modu is recognised as the founder of the first Turkish political union. However, it should not be forgotten that the other Turkic peoples who joined the Huns did not do so voluntarily, but by force of arms, and as will be seen in the future, they would rebel against the Hun rule whenever they had the opportunity.

40 Modu attacked Yuezhilara soon after his return from the East Hu campaign and organised further campaigns. At this time, the Han and Chu 楚 kingdoms, which had been established in China after the fall of the Qin Dynasty, were struggling with each other (206-202 BC),



THE GREAT HUN STATE

Having solidified his control over the eastern regions of the Eurasian steppes and leading a formidable army, Modu engaged in conflict with the Han Dynasty of China. When the Huns seized control of the steppes, China was experiencing political upheaval; following the collapse of the Qin Dynasty in 206 BC, the Han Dynasty assumed power four years later, yet it required an additional five years to establish its authority nationwide. Capitalizing on the precarious circumstances of his southern neighbor, Modu orchestrated a significant cavalry-centric expeditionary force and, throughout the winter of 201–200 BC, initiated an invasion of northern China from various directions. En route, he met Han Prince Xin (Han Wang Xin 韓王信), who was under siege by the Huns; the prince subsequently surrendered and aligned with him. Upon learning of the invasion, Emperor Gao of Han (reign 202–195 BC), notwithstanding resistance from certain perceptive officials, personally commanded his predominantly infantry-based army in a northward campaign in 200 BC. Nevertheless, as their campaign progressed, the escalating cold resulted in significant casualties within the Han forces. Upon receiving news of the Emperor's imminent arrival, Modu orchestrated a deliberate retreat, enticing the Han army to pursue him. He strategically ambushed them with his elite forces, presenting the Chinese with only the less formidable Hun soldiers. Convinced that he had successfully intimidated the Huns, the Emperor left the majority of his infantry behind and pursued the Huns with a small detachment, thereby widening the gap between the infantry and himself. As the Emperor approached the border between the Chinese and Hun territories and arrived in the Pingcheng district (xian 縣), he encountered the primary forces of the Hun army, personally led by Modu. Filled with fear, the Emperor and his troops fell back to the nearby hilly area called Baideng 白登 (Ak Tepe)[41]. The Huns encircled the hill from every direction, effectively isolating it from external communication. The severe weather had already resulted in casualties within the Chinese infantry, who, upon their arrival, were unable to facilitate the Emperor's rescue. For a week, Modu sustained the siege without initiating an attack; however, harboring suspicions of being entrapped when two Chinese generals loyal to Han Prince Xin did not appear at a previously agreed-upon rendezvous, he grew cautious. Chinese sources indicate that the Emperor clandestinely offered a bribe to Modu's spouse in an effort to

and Modu took advantage of this and increased his power. As mentioned above, Zizhi Tongjian records these events in 201 BC (*Hanshu* 94A.3750; *Shiji* 110.2889-2990; *Zizhi Tongjian* 11.373).

41 Refer to Hayrettin İhsan Erkoç, "Göktürk Boylarının Tespit Edilmesinde Çin ve Tibet Kaynaklarının Önemi", *Genel Türk Tarihi Kaynakları: Ordu Çalıştayı Bildirileri*, ed. M. Alpargu, et.al., Ordu 2019, p.93-95.



convince him to end the siege. Through her mediation, a ceasefire was established, permitting the Emperor to retreat southward and return to his realm.[42]

Once the campaign had ended, some of the Chinese generals rebelled against the Han Dynasty and defected to the Huns. As a result of the frequent raids carried out by these generals and Modu, into northern China, in 197 BC, and as part of the Heqin 和親 ("Marriage Alliance") policy, a Chinese princess was sent to Modu, and the two rulers were considered "brothers," which denoted equality between them. In years to come, this policy was systematized, and for a long period, Chinese princesses continued to be sent as consorts to Hun rulers. Additionally, as stipulated by the treaty, the Chinese were required to provide an annual tribute to the Huns in the form of designated quantities of silk fabric, liquor, rice, and provisions, indicating that the Han Dynasty would thereafter regularly pay tribute to the Huns to preserve peace. The policy of Marriage Alliance had been implemented since the Zhou Dynasty in China to ensure peace with northern tribal groups; nevertheless, with this treaty, it evolved into a more systematic practice. The princesses dispatched to the Hun rulers were not the emperor's biological offspring but rather individuals from other aristocratic families who were formally adopted by the emperors prior to their departure north and subsequently proclaimed as princesses. The commodities dispatched by the Chinese to the Huns consisted of luxury goods that the Huns were unable to manufacture themselves, thereby rendering them exceptionally valuable within their society.[43]

In fact, after the conclusion of this peace treaty with China, an extended period of tranquility ensued, during which, apart from occasional incursions by the Huns, no significant conflicts transpired between the involved parties. Following the demise of Emperor Gao, his widow, Empress Lü (Lü Hou 呂后), ascended to the position of regent and briefly assumed control over the administration of the nation. Chinese sources indicate that in 192 BC, Modu drafted a communication to the Empress, expressing his intention to seek her hand in marriage. While the Empress initially expressed considerable displeasure regarding the proposal, she subsequently regained composure following the intervention of one of her ministers, who respectfully declined the offer in a manner that averted a potential conflict with the Huns.[44]

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42 *Hanshu* 1B.63, 33.1853-1855, 64A.2801, 94A.3753-3754, 94B.3813, 3830-3831; *Shiji* 8.384-385, 93.2633-2634, 99.2718, 110.2894, 112.2955; *Zizhi Tongjian* 11.373, 376-379

43 *Hanshu* 1B.63, 33.1855-1856, 94A.3754; *Shiji* 93.2635, 99.2719, 110.2895. Marriage Alliance treaties were renewed on several occassions. In 157 BC, with an addition to this treaty, the Chinese opened markets on the borders where the Huns could shop freely. (*Hanshu* 94A.3764, 94B.3831; *Shiji* 110.2904).

44 *Hanshu* 3.99, 4.119, 49.2278-2279, 94A.3754-3758, 94B.3813; *Shiji* 10.425, 110.2895-2897.

In the concluding years of his rule, Modu persisted in his military endeavours on the steppes, once more prevailing over the Yuezhis in 176 BC. By integrating prosperous and significant city-states, predominantly Krorän (Loulan 樓蘭) in Eastern Turkestan, under his governance, he established a substantial revenue stream for the Hun State via the taxation levied on these territories. He additionally integrated the Wusun 烏孫, an Indo-European nomadic group residing in the Gansu region, along with the Hujie 呼揭, who were likely of Turkic origin, into his realm. Indeed, in a correspondence addressed to Han Emperor Wen (漢文帝; reign 180–157 BC) in 176 BC, Modu asserted that he had integrated the "bow-stringing" peoples into a unified family, proclaiming that they were henceforth all "Huns." As evidenced subsequently in the Eurasian steppes with the Göktürks, Türgesh, Uighurs, and Mongols, conquered populations frequently assimilated the political nomenclature of the state that had dominated them. Modu, the most prominent ruler of The Great Hun Empire, passed away in 174 BC, three years after the composition of this letter.[45]

Laoshang Chanyu 老上單于 (174-160 BC)

Following the death of Modu, his son Jiyu 稽鬻 (pronounced Ciyü)[46] came to the throne and assumed the title Laoshang Chanyu 老上單于[47]. This signifies the onset of a transformation in the administrative approach of the Hunnic state. The initial two documented Hun rulers in historical records, Touman and Modu,

[45] *Hanshu* 70.3010, 94A.3757-3758, 96A.3872, 96B.3901-3902, 3930; *Shiji* 110.2896, 2898. Indeed, whether Modu Chanyu is the Oghuz Khan or Oghuz Khan of Turkic mythology has been debated since the first modern studies on early Turkic history. The present author disagrees with the view that Modu Chanyu was in fact Oghuz Khan.

[46] In Turkish literature, this name is more commonly known as Ki-ok (Kafesoğlu, *op.cit.*, p.63). The probable reason for this is that Guignes transcribed the name into Latin as Ki-yo. (de Guignes, *Histoire générale*, Vol. I Part II, p.36; de Guignes, *Hunla- rın, Türklerin*, C.I, s.144). In fact, the sound, which is read as "thin c" in modern Mandarin Chinese and written as j in the Pinyin system (ch in the Wade-Giles system), was read as k in Old and Middle Chinese, and even today it can be read as g or k in the Kan- ton (Guangdong 廣東) dialect spoken in southern China. Therefore, until the mid-20th century, Westerners sometimes transcribed the j sound in Mandarin Chinese as k in Latin script, the most famous example being the spelling of Beijing, the present capital of China, as Peking or Beijing. The name Jiyu 稽鬻 was spelt kɛj-juwk in Early Middle Chinese according to Pulleyblank, and kej-juwk in Middle Chinese according to Baxter. (Kroll, *op.cit.*, p.182, 574; Pulleyblank, *op.cit.*, p.138, 385).

[47] *Hanshu* 94A.3758; *Shiji* 110.2898. Laoshang 老上 is thought to be a nickname meaning "Elder (and) Supreme" in Chinese or an Old Turkic title of which we do not know the original form edir (Baykuzu, *Asya Hun İmparatorluğu*, p.59; Kafesoğlu, *op.cit.*, p.63).



adopted the title "Chanyu" subsequent to their individual names only after their accession to the throne. Nevertheless, beginning with Jiyu and notably from the 1st century BC, the majority of Hun rulers commenced to adopt royal titles that were separate from their personal names upon assuming power. Indeed, this practice has historically been prevalent in China and was likely assimilated by the Huns from the Chinese.

During Laoshang's rule, the peaceful relations with China persisted; nevertheless, in 166 BC, Laoshang invaded China and set fire to the summer palace Huizhong 回中 located in the north. The vanguard units progressed as far as the capital Chang'an 長安 (presently Xi'an 西安). The Chinese, in defense of the capital, mobilized against the Huns; however, they were unable to engage in combat as the Huns retreated. In the ensuing years, numerous Hun incursions took place in northern China, leading the Chinese to seek a cessation of hostilities. Laoshang wed a Chinese princess as a concession for maintaining peace. Four years subsequently, in 162 BC, correspondence between Laoshang and Emperor Wen indicated that the Xiongnu and China were adjacent and of equal status.[48] States, and at Laoshang's suggestion, the Great Wall was deemed to be the boundary between the two states. In the same year, Laoshang defeated the Yuezhi for the last time and had a drinking vessel made from the skull of their ruler[49]. The Yuezhi migrated westward to the area of Transoxiana. Subjected to pressure from the Yuezhi, the Saka likewise departed from their ancestral lands, precipitating a phenomenon akin to a Migration Period. The Wusun relocated to the territories of the Yedisu region adjacent to Issyk-Kul, situated north of the Tian Shan Mountains, whereas the Saka transitioned to the Bactria area located north of modern-day Afghanistan, where the Greco-Bactrian Kingdom, a Hellenistic polity, was dismantled by the Saka

[48] The character di 敵 in Chinese texts has different meanings such as "enemy", "rival" and "equal". Therefore, Otkan translated this character as "equal" in his Shiji translation and Onat-Orsoy-Ercilasun translated it as "enemy" in their Hanshu translation (Onat-Ersoy-Ercilasun, *op.cit.*, p.20; Otkan, *op.cit.*, p.77).

[49] This practice, linked to the skull cult, was a prevalent ritual among Turkic communities and remained observable in subsequent periods among the Danubian Bulgars and the Pechenegs. The procedure entailed the boiling of the decapitated head to eliminate its flesh, followed by the application of valuable metals such as gold or silver to encase the skull. The fundamental objective of this practice was to harness the spiritual authority associated with the decapitated person. (Kubilay Gürses, *Korum Han ve Omurtag Han Zamanı Tuna Bulgar Hanlığı (803-831)*, (Unpublished Masters Thesis) Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart Üniversitesi Lisansüstü Eğitim Ens- titüsü, Tarih Anabilim Dalı, Çanakkale 2020, p.30).

invasion. Laoshang passed away shortly thereafter, in 160 BC, and his demise initiated a decline in the strength of The Great Hun Empire.[50]

Factors in the Stagnation and Decline in the Great Hun Empire

Following the death of Laoshang, his son Junchen Chanyu 軍臣單于 (pronounced Jünchın Chanyu; reign 160–126 BC)[51] became the next Hun ruler.[52] Throughout his reign and those of his successors, the Great Hun Empire experienced stagnation and decline, while the prolonged era of peace with China reached its conclusion. During the reign of Han Emperor Wu (Han Wudi 漢武帝) (141–87 BC), extensive conflicts between the Huns and China ensued, and the Chinese progressively began to curtail the Hun raids. The factors contributing to the decline of the Huns can be examined within four primary categories:

- Many natural disasters were commonplace such as extreme weather conditions, which resulted in droughts, famine, fires and locust infestations.[53]

- The differing military, economic, and political precautions employed by the Chinese.

- Uprisings of Tegreks, Wusuns, Wuhuans, and Serbi groups.[54]

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[50] *Hanshu* 4.123, 125-126, 129-131, 135, 54.2439-2440, 61.2687, 2692, 94A.3761-3762, 3764, 94B.3801, 3813, 3818, 96A.3884, 3890-3891, 3896, 96B.3901; *Shiji* 10.428-429, 431, 433, 109.2867-2869, 110.2901, 2903-2904; Golden, *An Introduction*, p.50-55; Golden, *Türk Halkları*, p.65-69.

[51] The name and title Junchen 軍臣 is known in Turkish literature as Kun-chin (Kafesoğlu, *op.cit.*, p.64). This is because de Guignes transcribed the name and title into Latin as Ki-un-tchin. (de Guignes, *Histoire générale*, Vol.I Part I, p.216, Vol.I Part II, p.43; de Guignes, *Hunların, Türklerin…*, Vol.I, p.150). The name was pronounced kun-dzin in Early Middle Chinese according to Pulleyblank, and kjun-dzyin in Middle Chinese according to Baxter (Kroll, *op.cit.*, p.233, 46; Pulleyblank, *op.cit.*, p.169, 53). These Middle Chinese rendering does point to a Kunchin-style name.

[52] For the reign of Junchen, see. *Hanshu* 94A.3764-3767; *Shiji* 110.2904-2907. For the Chinese raids of the Huns between 160-144 BC, see. Hanshu 5.140, 145, 150-151; *Shiji* 11.439, 444, 446, 448.

[53] For the natural disasters in 104, 89, 72, 68 and 41 BC, refer to Hanshu 94A.3775, 3781, 3787-3788, 94B.3802; Shiji 110.2915.

[54] They were attacked by Xiru 西嘑 in 68 BC, city-states in East Turkestan in 67 BC, Huns Wusun-Tegrek in 72 BC (Dingling丁令)-Wuhuan (Hanshu 94A.3785-3787, 94B.3814), Wusun-China in 71 BC (Hanshu 8.243-244, 70.3003-3004, 94A.3785, 96B.3905),Tegrek (Hanshu 94A.3788) in 64-62 BC, Wuhuan (Hanshu 94A.3790) in 58 BC and Wusun (Hanshu 94B.3800) in 49 BC. On the revolt of the Wusun against the Huns, see also. *Hanshu* 96B.3901.



- Internal struggles and succession disputes within the dynasty.

The Precautionary Measures taken by the Chinese against the Huns

In the eras of Modu and Laoshang, the Chinese found it challenging to compete with the Huns in military proficiency and were therefore obliged to pay tribute. Nevertheless, in the long term, the Chinese initiated specific strategies to diminish the influence of the Huns and correspondingly fortify their own defenses. An early initiative undertaken by the Chinese in response to the Huns included the operations of Chinese emissaries and informants dispatched to the Hun leaders and the populations situated to the west of the Hun territory. These individuals pursued multiple objectives: they aimed to deceive and ensnare the Hun rulers, collected intelligence while residing in Hun territories, and endeavored to provoke rebellion among the populations allied with The Great Hun Empire, as well as neighboring groups antagonistic to the Huns, encouraging them to form alliances with China.[55] Also, Chinese emperors adopted a policy of divide and conquer among the Huns by simultaneously sending envoys to multiple members of the Hun royal family[56]. These diplomatic initiatives occasionally demonstrated efficacy, enabling the Han Dynasty to formulate a prosperous strategy regarding the Huns; nevertheless, there were instances when the intended populations declined to form alliances with China. Furthermore, Chinese officials aimed to address the complacency of the Hun aristocracy, which resulted from the provision of luxury items such as silk and wine as a secondary strategy. Similarly, the border markets established at the Hun-Chinese frontier at the behest of the Huns were anticipated to fulfill a comparable function: it was envisaged that the Huns engaged in trade would progressively assimilate Chinese culture and lifestyle, ultimately integrating and sinicizing. Notwithstanding, this initiative by the Chinese targeting the Huns proved unsuccessful. Despite the fact that the Hun nobles continued their fondness for luxury Chinese goods, They did not relinquish their martial attributes, and the Huns who arrived for commercial activities engaged in trade, consumed food and beverages, and subsequently returned to their territories without establishing residency in the area.[57]

Hun armies were composed exclusively of cavalry, which conferred upon them a military advantage over the Chinese, particularly from the late 3rd century BC to

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55 *Hanshu* 54.2459-2460, *Shiji* 108.2861.

56 *Hanshu* 94A.3774, 94B.3823-3824, 3829; *Shiji* 110.2915.

57 With regard to the Hun's weakness for Chinese goods, see Hanshu 94A.3759, 3765, *Shiji* 99.2719, 110.2899, 2905.

the third quarter of the 2nd century BC. Recognizing that their current military framework was inadequate to address the threat posed by the Huns, the Chinese progressively initiated the development of diverse military strategies. These strategies can be classified into four primary categories: establishing defensive barriers, organizing ambushes, implementing reforms, and executing conquests. In China, the establishment of defensive fortifications to deter Hun incursions commenced during the Warring States Period (Zhanguo 戰國) (475–221 BC), and as previously mentioned, the renowned Great Wall of China was constructed during the Qin dynasty. In the ensuing Han period, increased attention was directed towards the construction of fortifications along the frontiers and the establishment of military garrisons in those areas.[58] In one incident, the Chinese endeavored to establish ambushes along the paths that the Huns were expected to traverse within China; however, these ambushes were preemptively identified by the Huns and consequently proved ineffective.[59]

The Han Dynasty enacted a range of reforms aimed at enhancing the strength of their military, which had demonstrated inadequacies against the Hun forces. These reforms encompassed augmenting the employment of the crossbow (nu 弩), broadening cavalry units based on the Hunnic model, and procuring horses from the Fergana region. The crossbow, which originated in China during the Zhou Dynasty, functioned as an infantry weapon featuring a trigger mechanism akin to that found in contemporary rifles; it necessitated minimal training time, offered exceptional accuracy, and proved highly lethal at close ranges. Given that the process of loading and cocking crossbows was more time-consuming compared to the composite bows utilized by the Huns while mounted, the Chinese employed crossbowmen positioned behind substantial shields in combat or within fortifications during sieges. While the Hun bows possessed a greater range, their effective range for penetrating shields and armor was notably reduced. Therefore, in skirmishes with the Chinese, the Huns adopted a policy of approaching enemy lines as closely as possible to fire their arrows and then retreat. The Chinese, on the other hand, equipped thousands

[58] For examples dated to 200, 166, 158, 129, 127, 121, 119, 112, 104, 102, 78, and 60 BC, see Hanshu 6.166, 170, 196; 54.2459; 64A.2803; 94A.3753, 3761, 3764, 3766, 3769, 3770, 3773–3776, 3783, 3789; 94B.3803–3804, 3813, 3831; 96A.3873; 96B.3928; and Shiji 81.2449; 110.2894, 2901, 2904, 2906, 2909, 2911, 2913–2916; 111.2923, 2933, 2941–2942; 112.2961–2962. Chinese frontier troops were also capable of transmitting warnings to the capital with great speed by sending smoke signals from signal towers when the Xiongnu crossed the border and invaded China (Hanshu 94A.3764, 3784; 94B.3804, 3826; 96B.3912–3913, 3926; Shiji 81.2449; 108.2862; 110.2904).

[59] In relation to the example of134 BC, see *Hanshu* 52.2398-2405, 54.2442-2443, 94A.3765, 94B.3813; *Shiji* 108.2861-2863, 109.2870, 110.2905.



of infantry soldiers with crossbows, inflicting heavy losses on the Huns with accurate shots when the enemy came close to their lines[60].

Beginning notably with the reign of Emperor Wu, the Han Dynasty augmented the quantity of cavalry units proficient in both close-quarters combat and ranged warfare in the manner of the Xiongnu. These units were positioned along the Hun-Chinese border to deter Hun incursions and execute offensive maneuvers against the Huns.[61] However, similat to many periods throughout history, the Chinese came face to face with a shortage of horses. In order to address this, they decided to acquire tall horses bred in the Hellenistic Fergana (Da Yuan 大宛, "Great Ionia") Kingdom in Western Turkestan. These horses, which the Chinese referred to as "Heavenly Horses" (Tianma 天馬) or "Sweating Blood Horses" (Hanxuema 汗血馬)[62], were taller than the short steppe horses ridden by the Huns, giving riders an advantage in height in battle. Furthermore, their elongated limbs enabled them to achieve higher running speeds compared to steppe horses. Nevertheless, the Fergana horses were fragile creatures that necessitated attentive human care and exhibited limited tolerance to the severe winters of the Inner Asian steppes, rendering them less effective during Hun incursions occurring in the winter months. Conversely, despite their reduced stature, the Hun horses exhibited remarkable resilience to these severe climatic conditions and necessitated minimal maintenance. Throughout the winter months, Hun horses employed their hooves to maneuver through snow and fracture ice in order to access the grass underneath. Although characterized by shorter legs and consequently slower speeds compared to Fergana horses, their robust durability facilitated their prolonged and more dependable utilization during military campaigns and engagements.[63]

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60 *Hanshu* 49.2281, 54.2445, 2452-2454, 2456, 70.3013-3014; *Shiji* 109.2873.

61 *Hanshu* 4.125, 6.165, 189, 201, 203, 8.243-244, 9.295, 49.2281, 52.2404, 54.2441-2442, 2445, 2451, 61.2704, 70.3004, 94A.3761, 3766, 3768-3769, 3771, 3775, 3777-3779, 3784-3785, 3787-3789, 94B.3823-3824, 3831, 96B.3905, 3914, 3922, 3928; *Shiji* 10.428, 108.2862, 109.2869-2870, 2872, 2877, 110.2901, 2906, 2908, 2910, 2912, 2915, 2917, 111.2923, 2925, 2927-2931, 2933-2936, 2938, 2945-2946. The Han dynasty sometimes fought the Huns of the East Turkestan city-states (Hanshu 9.295, 61.2695, 70.3010-3012,3014, 3017, 3019), from the Wusuns (Hanshu 8.244, 70.3004, 3010-3012, 3014, 3017-3019). He also used su- varies collected from Huns who had surrendered to China (Hanshu 19.738, 54.2460; Shiji 111.2939).

62 Horses are so named because of the parasites that live under their skin and feed on their blood, causing them to burst and bleed when they run. (Onat, *op.cit.*, p.40).

63 *Hanshu* 49.2281, 2284, 52.2398, 61.2694, 2697, 96A.3894; *Shiji* 108.2861; Kara, *op.cit.*, p.267.



The person who familiarised the Chinese with the Fergana horses was Zhang Qian 張騫, a diplomat and statesman who could also be considered to be a quasi-spy sent by Emperor Wu to Turkestan(referred to in Chinese sources as Xiyu 西域, meaning the "Western Regions") to form an alliance with the Yuezhi people living west of the Huns against the Huns, Zhang Qian's expedition spanned a period of thirteen years, from 138 to 125 BC. Shortly after commencing his journey, Zhang Qian was apprehended by the Huns and detained among them for approximately a decade. Ultimately, he successfully escaped and advanced towards the Yuezhi, endeavoring to persuade them to establish an alliance. Nevertheless, the Yuezhi, residing in tranquility and disinclined to engage in conflict with the Huns, while also viewing China as excessively remote, rejected the proposed alliance. Therefore, although Zhang Qian did not achieve his original objectives, he acquired knowledge regarding the renowned qualities of the Fergana horses from these populations and returned with several specimens during his expedition. Upon his return to China, Zhang Qian was once more apprehended by the Huns; however, he was subsequently released and successfully returned home, where he submitted a concise account of his observations to the Emperor. This report fundamentally laid the foundation for the Han Dynasty's policies directed towards the Huns. The Hanshu documents that Zhang Qian inaugurated the pathway to the Western Regions, leading contemporary historians to consider him the originator of the Silk Road. Subsequently, Zhang Qian was dispatched as an envoy to negotiate an alliance with the Wusun; however, his mission proved unsuccessful. The Wusun conveyed to him that given the geographical distance of China and the proximity of the Huns, an alignment with the Chinese and a declaration of war against the Huns would likely result in their defeat by the Huns before Han forces could render assistance.[64] Subsequently, the Han Dynasty sourced horses from the Kingdom of Fergana; however, after their request was declined, they engaged in a challenging campaign in 101 BC, ultimately subjugating the kingdom, absorbing it into their territories, and began to receive Fergana horses as a form of tribute.[65]

When Emperor Wu ascended the throne in 140 BC, despite renewing the Marriage Alliance Treaty, he gradually grew in power and abandoned the alliance, ceasing the tribute payments to the Xiongnu. The Emperor's attempt in 134 BC to ambush Junchen marked the beginning of the long-lasting Han–Xiongnu wars. Nonetheless,

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64 *Hanshu* 54.2462, 61.2687-2689, 2692-2693, 2695, 94A.3773, 96A.3873, 3876, 389596B.3902; *Shiji* 110.2913, 111.2929, 2944.

65 *Hanshu* 54.2451, 61.2697-2704, 70.3017-3018, 94A.3775-3776, 94B.3814, 96A.3873, 3877, 3895; *Shiji* 12.483, 110.2915, 2917.



thanks to Junchen's knowledge of the trap, the Chinese plan failed[66]. In retailation, the Xiongnu started intensive raids into Chinese territory[67]. Due to the fact that military reforms were still ongoing, the Chinese at times endured defeats in their skirmishes with the Xiongnu. Indeed, some of the Han governors and generals were killed or captured[68]. Even after the reforms were completed, similar occurances continued[69]. Furthermore, when faced with large Chinese armies, the Xiongnu would fall back to the north of the Gobi Desert to shake off their enemy, while the Chinese, unfamiliar with warfare in the steppe and desert environment, often had to retreat without entering the Gobi due to logistical difficulties.[70] The incursions of the Xiongnu ultimately necessitated military campaigns and territorial acquisitions by the Chinese within the domain of the Xiongnu. Nevertheless, due to the sustained strength of the Xiongnu, rather than pursuing the conquest of their Mongolian territory, the Chinese initially prioritized the capture of Ordos, Gansu (formerly referred to as Hexi 河西, or "[West of the Yellow] River"), and Eastern Turkestan, guided by a strategy termed "Cutting off the Xiongnu's Right Arm" (Duan Xiongnu You Bi 斷匈奴右臂). Ordos and Gansu held considerable economic importance for the Xiongnu, primarily owing to their abundant pastures. The Qilian Mountains (Qilianshan 祁連山), situated at the edge of modern-day Kokonor (Qinghai 青海) within Gansu—an area that constituted the core of the Xiongnu's western wing—were regarded as sacred by the Xiongnu. Furthermore, the Xiongnu sustained communica-

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66 *Hanshu* 52.2398-2405, 54.2442-2443, 94A.3765, 94B.3813; *Shiji* 108.2861-2863, 109.2870, 110.2905.

67 For raids in 134, 128-124 and 122-120 BC, see. Hanshu 6.165, 169-172, 175-177, 52.2406, 54.2443, 94A.3765-3769; Shiji 108.2864-2865, 109.2871, 110.2905-2910, 111.2923-2924, 2934.

68 For examples from 129-128, 126, 124-123 and 121 BC see Hanshu 6.165-166, 169, 171-172, 176, 52.2406, 54.2443, 2450, 2459-2460, 2464, 2466, 61.2691, 2703, 94A.3766-3768; Shiji 108.2864-2865, 109.2870-2871, 2877, 110.2906-2909, 111.2923, 2926-2927, 2942-2943, 2946

69 For examples from 103-102, 99, 97 and 90 BC, see Hanshu 6.188, 201, 203-204, 209, 54.2454- 2457, 61.2699, 2704, 94A.3775, 3777-3778, 3780, 96B.3912-3913; Shiji 109.2877-2878, 110.2915, 2918

70 For examples from 166, 158, 134, 123 and 112 BC, see Hanshu 4.125-126, 131, 6.201, 52.2404, 54.2451, 94A. 3753-3754, 3762, 3764-3765, 3768, 3771, 94B.3813; Shiji 10.428-429, 432, 108.2862, 109.2877, 110.2894–2895, 2901, 2904-2905, 2908, 2912, 111.2934. The Huns as witnessed in 119, 97, 90, 80, and 72 BC, when the Han armies moved north of the Gobi, sent the civilian population and their forces further north (Hanshu 55.2484, 94A.3769, 3778, 3783, 3785; Shiji 110.2910, 2918, 111.2935). On the logistical difficulties encountered by the Chinese armies in the wars with the Huns, also see Hanshu 64A.2800, 70.3019, Shiji 112.2954

tion with the Qiang 羌, a mountainous and martial Tibetan group in western China, even collaborating with them in opposition to the Han Dynasty. Initially, the Chinese focused on Ordos and Gansu; however, following the successes of Han generals Wei Qing and Huo Qubing from 127 to 119 BC, these areas came under Chinese dominion. The acquisition of both regions led to the Xiongnu's loss of considerable pasturelands and disrupted their communication with the Qiang. Beginning in 119 BC, Han forces also undertook expeditions into the Xiongnu territory in Mongolia, yet despite their victories, they failed to achieve conquest and were compelled to withdraw. The primary reason for this was the heavy casulties of soldiers and horses suffered by the Han armies in the battles during those years.[71] Thereafter, a series of campaigns began in 101 BC, targeting Eastern Turkestan, and ensuring that its flourishing states were no longer under Xiongnu control.[72] In 72 BC, as part of Huyandi Chanyu's (reigned 85-68 BC) campaign against the Wusun, the Xiongnu army encountered a significant blizzard and sustained substantial losses. Subsequently, assaults by the Tegreks, Wuhuan, and the Chinese further eroded the strength of the Great Xiongnu State.[73]

Blows to the Hun Economy

The economy of the Great Xiongnu State exhibited considerable fragility, with its revenues derived from a variety of sources. These encompassed livestock management, periodic tributes received from China, tax revenue gathered from nomadic groups and urban centers, and at times, spoils acquired through incursions into Chinese territory. The Han Dynasty adopted a prudent strategy focused on gradually undermining the Xiongnu's strength prior to initiating a direct assault on their principal territories. In this context, the strategies and policies formulated by the Chinese inflicted significant damage to the economy of the Great Xiongnu State over an extended period. Notably, the most significant of these factors was the erosion of productive grazing lands and the termination of tax revenues from city-states following the acquisition of Ordos, Gansu, and Eastern Turkestan by China, which effectively

[71] *Hanshu* 6.165, 169-170, 172-173, 176, 188-189, 203, 209, 8.243, 52.2406, 54.2444-2450-2451, 2459, 61.2691, 2695, 2698, 68.2959, 94A.3766-3771, 3773, 3777-3779, 3785-3787, 94B.3803-3804, 3813-3814, 3824, 3831-3832, 96A.3873-3874, 96B.3905, 3928; *Shiji* 108.2864, 109.2872-2877, 110.2906-2908, 2910-2911, 2913, 2918, 111.2923-2931, 2933-2938, 2940-2945

[72] *Hanshu* 61.2701, 2703, 70.3004, 94A.3779, 3788, 94B.3814, 3816, 96A.3877-3878, 96B.3912, 3922-3923, 3928; *Shiji* 111.2945

[73] *Hanshu* 8.243-244, 70.3004, 94A.3787.



eliminated a crucial component of the Xiongnu economy, as previously indicated. In fact, throughout Emperor Wu's rule, the Chinese ceased the practice of delivering annual tributes and gifts, and as a consequence of successfully countering Xiongnu incursions, the resulting spoils were markedly reduced. Alongside declines in all these revenue streams, livestock husbandry—fundamental to the Xiongnu economy—was also disrupted by various natural disasters experienced during specific periods. Adjacent populations, capitalizing on the decline of the Great Xiongnu State, along with Chinese offensives against the Xiongnu, inflicted additional harm on the Xiongnu economy, as numerous individuals, livestock, and commodities were seized as spoils during these attacks. As a result of these significant losses, the Great Xiongnu State encountered economic difficulties, and with the decline of the economy, internal unrest commenced within the state administration.[74]

Internal Disputes and Division

The Great Xiongnu State had a solid and well-functioning governance structure from its emergence onwards. The weakening of the state was prolonged and lasted a long time. The weakening of the state began with the onset of internal conflicts much later compared to the Turkish states such as the Göktürks or the Uyghurs, that later succeeded it.[75]

The First Division (58-36 BC)

Following the death of Xuluquanqu Chanyu 虛閭權渠單于 (reigned 68–60 BC), Woyanqudi Chanyu 握衍朐鞮單于 (reigned 60–58 BC) succeeded him. Due to the harsh nature of his rule, uprisings and internal conflicts arose among the Xiongnu against his rule. During this period, a member of the Xiongnu royal family named

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74 On nomadic and settled lifestyles, agriculture and economic structure in the Huns, see *Hanshu* 94A.3743, 3751, 94B.3834; *Shiji* 110.2879, 2891; *Yantie Lun* 7.38, 9.52; Hayret- tin İhsan Erkoç, "Hunlarda Konargöçerlik ve Yerleşik Yaşam", *Türk Yurdu*, No.245 (2023), p.39-47; Hayrettin İhsan, Erkoç, " "...Suları ve Otlakları İzleyerek Göç Ederler..." Hun Topluluklarında Konargöçerlik ve Yerleşik Yaşam", *Disiplinlerarası Hun Çalışmaları*, ed. Csilla Balogh ve Hakan Aydemir, Paradigma Akademi Publications, Çanakkale 2023, p.121-159; Öz- türk, *Asya Hunlarında İktisadi Hayat*; Öztürk, *Asya Hunlarında Tarım ve Yerleşik Hayat*.

75 In fact, the first struggle for the throne among the Huns after Touman's assassination by his son Modu took place in 126 BC between Junchen's brother Yizhixie 伊稚斜 and Yudan於單, son of the chanyun, Yudan was defeated and fled to China, where he died shortly afterwards. (*Hanshu* 94A.3767; *Shiji* 110.2907).

Jihoushan 稽侯狦 was declared Huhanye Chanyu 呼韓邪單于, and the defeated Woyanqudi subsequently took his own life.[76] It was during this period that division within the Xiongnu began: between 58 and 56 BC, four other members of the royal family simultaneously declared themselves Chanyu, splitting the Xiongnu into five separate factions. Following the ensuing struggles, these four rival chanyus were eradicated. However, in 56 BC, two more royal family members announced their chanyulüks; one of them was Hutuwusi 呼屠吾斯, who was Huhanye's elder brother and assumed the title Zhizhi Guduhou Chanyu 郅支骨都侯單于.[77] By 54 BC, only Huhanye and Zhizhi were left in contention, with Zhizhi ultimately prevailing over his brother to capture the political center of the Xiongnu. Subsequently, a state official urged Huhanye to capitulate to the Han Dynasty, asserting that the Xiongnu had become insufficient in strength to sustain their existence autonomously. When Huhanye submitted this proposal to the state council, all Xiongnu officials expressed their opposition, asserting that the Xiongnu had historically maintained their independence from China. Following extensive deliberations, in 53 BC, Huhanye retreated southward to the Ordos region and surrendered to China, dispatching his son as a hostage to the Han court. Likewise, Zhizhi dispatched his son to the Han court as a hostage and exhibited fidelity to China; however, he subsequently assumed the role of leader of the northern faction. Consequently, for the first time in their historical trajectory, the Xiongnu bifurcated into Northern and Southern factions. Nonetheless, as Huhanye reinforced his position through Chinese assistance, Zhizhi, perceived as advocating for independence, moved towards the west. Consequently, in the present day, Huhanye's realm is referred to as the Eastern Xiongnu, while that of Zhizhi is known as the Western Xiongnu.[78]

In 50 BC, the Xiongnu leaders dispatched emissaries to China; however, the Han Dynasty's increased focus on Huhanye's envoy led to a division between the Chinese and Zhizhi. Recognizing Huhanye's vulnerability, Zhizhi aimed to capture the western territories of the Great Xiongnu State in 49 BC. During that period, another

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[76] *Hanshu* 94A.3789-3791.

[77] The title Zhizhi 郅支 is pronounced Cıcı, but since it was transliterated into Latin by de Guignes as Tchi-tchi and in the Wade-Giles system as Chih-chih, it is more commonly known as Çi-çi in Turkish literature. (de Guignes, *Histoire générale*, C.I/II, p.90-95; de Guignes, *Hunların, Türklerin…*, Vol.I, p.188, 190-193; Kafesoğlu, *op.cit.*, p.65). According to Pulleyblank, the title was read tɕit-tɕiă and tɕit-tɕi in Early Middle Chinese, and according to Baxter, tsyijH-tsye in Middle Chinese (Kroll, op. cit., pp. 609, 603; Pulleyblank, op. cit., pp. 410, 404). These Middle Chinese readings indeed point to a Chichi-style title.

[78] *Hanshu* 8.266-268, 269-271, 54.2468, 70.3008, 94B.3795-3799, 3814, 3832, 96A.3874, 3892, 3896



member of the Xiongnu royal family proclaimed himself Chanyu in the area; however, Zhizhi successfully suppressed him, assumed command of his forces, and further augmented his power. Owing to his brother's backing from China, Zhizhi resolved to establish his presence in the region and initiated a proposal for an alliance with the Wusun; nevertheless, the Wusun, being allied with China, declined his proposition. Zhizhi then overcame them and consequently dominated the northern Wujie 烏揭.[79], the Tegrek, and the Kyrgyz (Jiankun 堅昆) peoples. After conquering these three Turkic peoples and repeatedly defeating the Wusun, Zhizhi settled in the Kyrgyz territories located in present-day South Siberia. The continuous Chinese backing of Huhanye angered Zhizhi, who finally demanded the return of his son held hostage in the Han court in 48 BC. Upon receiving his son, Zhizhi had the Chinese envoy who brought him killed, thereby declaring his independence. Fearing Zhizhi's growing power supported by China, Zhizhi contemplated migrating further west. During this period, he was extended an invitation to form an alliance by the Kangju state, located along the Syr Darya River in contemporary Western Turkestan, to unite against their mutual adversary, the Wusun. Zhizhi accepted the invitation and relocated to Turkestan; however, he experienced a significant loss of his followers owing to extreme cold during the journey. Upon arriving in the region, Zhizhi compelled the Kangju to construct a fortified capital for him along the banks of the Talas River (Dulaishui 都賴水) in 41 BC and demanded tribute from the As/Alan (Hesu 闔蘇, Yancai 奄蔡) and Ferghana states. In 36 BC, a Han army commanded by the Governor of the Western Regions, Gan Yanshou 甘延壽, along with his deputy Chen Tang 陳湯, commenced a campaign targeting Western Turkestan. The Han army garnered support from the city-states of Eastern Turkestan and the Wusun throughout the expedition and subsequently laid siege to Zhizhi's capital upon arriving in Talas. A Kangju army dispatched to assist in the siege was successfully repelled by the Han forces. Subsequently, the Chinese forces breached the walls, and following Zhizhi's injury by an arrow to the face in the midst of the battle, he withdrew to his palace. The Chinese successfully infiltrated the palace and engaged in combat with the Xiongnu present until the ultimate confrontation in the throne room, during which Zhizhi perished in battle. A limited number of surviving Xiongnu were apprehended, thereby leading to the demise of the Western Xiongnu state at the hands of the Chinese.[80]

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[79] The name of this people is Wujie 烏揭 in the *Hun Section of Hanshu and Wujie* 烏揭 *in the Biography of Chen Tang*, it is written as Hujie 呼偈.

[80] *Hanshu* 8.271, 273, 275, 9.295, 297, 70.3007-3022, 3026-3028, 94B.3798-3802, 96A.3892.

Reunification of the Great Hun Empire

Following the demise of his brother, Huhanye ascended to the position of the sole ruler of the Xiongnu, thereby reunifying the Great Xiongnu State. In 43 BC, the chanyu, who oriented himself northward and remained loyal to the Han Dynasty throughout his lifetime, was wed to Wang Zhaojun 王昭君, recognized as one of the Four Great Beauties of China (Si Da Meinü 四大美女). Following its demise in 31 BC, the Xiongnu continued restoring their strength, leading to the emergence of tensions between them and the Han Dynasty. The Chinese statesman Wang Mang deposed the Han Dynasty in 9 CE and founded his own Xin Dynasty, intending to apportion the Xiongnu among fifteen chanyus. As a result, conflicts between the Xiongnu and the Chinese recommenced. During the rule of Huduershi Daogao Ruodi Chanyu (18–46 CE), son of Huhanye, the Xiongnu attained their independence and reclaimed Eastern Turkestan, often conducting incursions into Chinese territories. Subsequently, following the demise of Wang Mang at the hands of Chinese rebels in 23 CE, the Han Dynasty was reinstated. Nonetheless, the Xiongnu had increased in strength and persisted in executing raids on Chinese provinces governed by the Han dynasty. The Great Xiongnu State sustained its authority; however, around 46 CE, the prevailing conditions began to deteriorate once again.[81]

The Second Division (48 AD)

In 46 CE, when Punu Chanyu 蒲奴單于, the son of Huduershi, assumed leadership of the Xiongnu, the Xiongnu faced serious challenges due to famines, livestock mortality, and starvation, alongside conflicts with the insurgent Wuhuan from the east. Punu's uncle, Bi 比, who regarded the throne as his legitimate inheritance, experienced significant agitation and, two years subsequently in 48 CE, suggested functioning as an intermediary to solicit aid from China. Nevertheless, after becoming aware of this information, Xiongnu officials insisted on his execution. In reaction, Bi amassed forces with the objective of eradicating these officials. Upon learning of this, Punu confronted Bi; however, recognizing his inability to prevail, he retreated northward, while Bi fled southward toward the Chinese border. In alliance with the Han Dynasty, Bi adopted the title previously held by his grandfather and proclaimed himself Huhanye Chanyu 呼韓邪單于; he was also referred to as Xiluoshi Zhudi Chanyu 醯落尸逐鞮單于. Consequently, the Xiongnu were divided

[81] *Hanshu* 10.310, 11.344, 70.3017, 94B.3801, 3803-3829, 3833, 96B.3926-3927, 3930; *Hou-Hanshu* 12.505-508, 89.2940-2941.



into Northern and Southern factions, a division that remained permanent throughout their historical trajectory. [82]

The Northern Xiongnu State, which arose after the fragmentation of the Great Xiongnu Empire, tenaciously sought autonomy and incurred great costs through arduous conflicts with its neighboring entities. This state was annihilated by the Chinese in 93 CE, and its last independent factions were eradicated by the Chinese and the Serbi between 94 and 137 CE. Although the majority of the Northern Xiongnu migrated westward, the residual groups integrated with the Serbi; those who advanced westward would subsequently reemerge in historical narratives as the European Huns.[83] The Southern Xiongnu State, since its inception, exhibited fidelity to the Han Dynasty and served as both a buffer zone and a subordinate entity of China. This state often encountered uprisings initiated by its own clans that opposed subordination to China, culminating in its dissolution by the Chinese in 216 CE. After the collapse of the Han Dynasty in 220 CE, China fragmented into three kingdoms, while the Huns progressively began to establish themselves in northern China and infiltrate the region by working as mercenaries.[84] Indeed, in the 4th and 5th centuries, four short-lived Hun states were established in northern and northwestern China: Former Zhao (Qian Zhao 前趙; 304-329), Later Zhao (Hou Zhao 後趙; 319-351), Xia 夏 (407-431), and Northern Liang (Bei Liang 北涼; 397-439).[85]

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82 *Hou Hanshu* 89.2939, 2942-2943

83 *Hanshu* 96B.3930; *Hou Hanshu* 49.2943-2954, 2956, 2958; Baykuzu, *Asya Hun İmparatorluğu*, p.147-158.

84 *Hou Hanshu* 49.2939-2967, 2971; Baykuzu, *Asya Hun İmparatorluğu*, p.161-184.

85 Baykuzu, *Asya Hun İmparatorluğu*, p.187-192.

Great Hun Chanyus*

Name	Title	Reign
Touman 頭曼	Touman Chanyu 頭曼單于	Unknown-209 BC approximately
Modu 冒頓	Modu Chanyu 冒頓單于	Approximately 209 BC-174
Jiyu 稽鬻	Laoshang Chanyu 老上單于	174-160 BC
Junchen 軍臣	Junchen Chanyu 軍臣單于	160-126 BC
Yizhixie 伊稚斜	Yizhixie Chanyu 伊稚斜單于	126-114 BC
Wuwei 烏維	Wuwei Chanyu 烏維單于	114-105 BC
Wushilu 烏師廬	Chanyu Minor (Er Chanyu 兒單于)	105-102 BC
Goulihu 呴犁湖	Goulihu Chanyu 呴犁湖單于	102-101 BC
Judihou 且鞮侯	Judihou Chanyu 且鞮侯單于	101-96 BC
Unknown	Hulugu Chanyu 狐鹿姑單于	96-85 BC
Unknown	Huyandi Chanyu 壺衍鞮單于	85-68 BC
Unknown	Xuluquanqu Chanyu 虛閭權渠單于	68-60 BC
Tuqitang 屠耆堂	Woyanqudi Chanyu 握衍朐鞮單于	60-58 BC
Jihoushan 稽侯狦	Huhanye Chanyu 呼韓邪單于	58-31 BC (between 58-36 BC only the Eastern Huns ruler)
Boxutang 薄胥堂	Tuqi Chanyu 屠耆單于	58-56 BC
Unknown	Hujie Chanyu 呼揭單于	57 BC
Unknown	Juli Chanyu 車犁單于	57-56 BC
Unknown	Wujie Chanyu 烏藉單于	57-56 BC
Unknown	Runzhen Chanyu 閏振單于	56-54 BC
Hutuwusi 呼屠吾斯	Zhizhi Guduhou Chanyu 郅支骨都侯單于	56-36 BC (Western Huns ruler)
Unknown	Yilimu Chanyu 伊利目單于	49 BC
Diaotaomogao 雕陶莫皋	Fuzhulei Ruodi Chanyu 復株絫若鞮單于	31-20 BC
Jumixu 且麋胥	Souxie Ruodi Chanyu 搜諧若鞮單于	20-12 BC
Jumoju 且莫車	Cheya Ruodi Chanyu 車牙若鞮單于	12-8 BC
Nangzhiyasi 囊知牙斯	Wuzhuliu Ruodi Chanyu 烏珠留若鞮單于	8 BC-13 AD
Xian 咸	Wulei Ruodi Chanyu 烏累若鞮單于	13-18 AD
Yu 輿	Huduershi Daogao Ruodi Chanyu 呼都而尸道皋若鞮單于	18-46 AD
Wudadihou 烏達鞮侯	Wudadihou Chanyu 烏達鞮侯單于	46 AD
Punu 蒲奴	Punu Chanyu 蒲奴單于	The united Huns between 46-48 AD, after which only the ruler of the Northern Huns



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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Map of the Great Hun Empire



National Museum of Mongolia, Ulaanbaatar [Ulan-Bator], Mongolia, 24 July 2018.

Source: Hayrettin İhsan Erkoç Archive

Appendix 2: A carpet found in the Noyon uul Ноён уул (Noyn-Ula) Kurgans, the largest kurgan site of the Great Huns and dated to the 1st-1st centuries BC-AD. According to one view, the figures on this carpet, made in Bactria, depict Yuezhar*



National Museum of Mongolia, 24 July 2018.

Source: Hayrettin İhsan Erkoç Archive

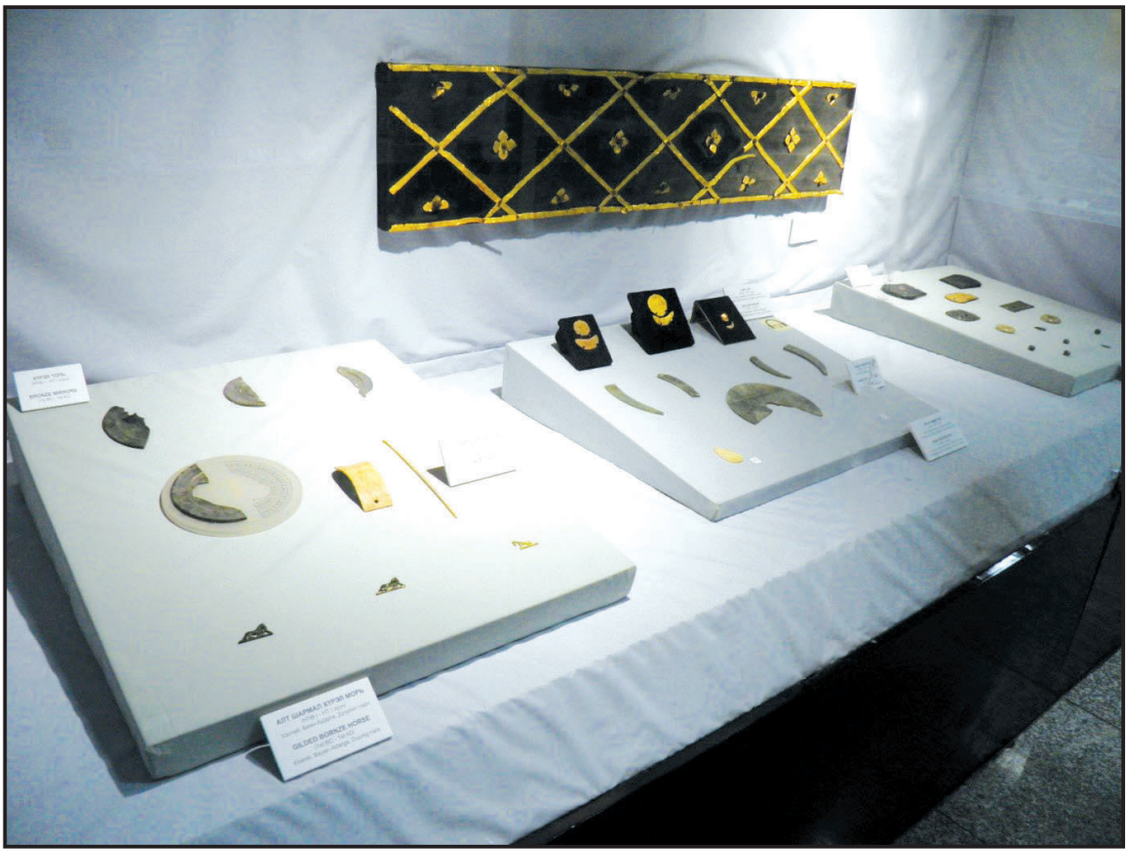
Appendix 3: A scene of a griffon (a mythological creature, a mixture of eagle and lion) hunting a deer on a felt Hun carpet found in the Noyon uul Kurgans



Genghis Khan and His Heirs - The Great Mongol Empire Exhibition, Sakıp Sabancı Museum, Istanbul, Turkey, 10 February 2007.

Source: Hayrettin İhsan Erkoç Archive

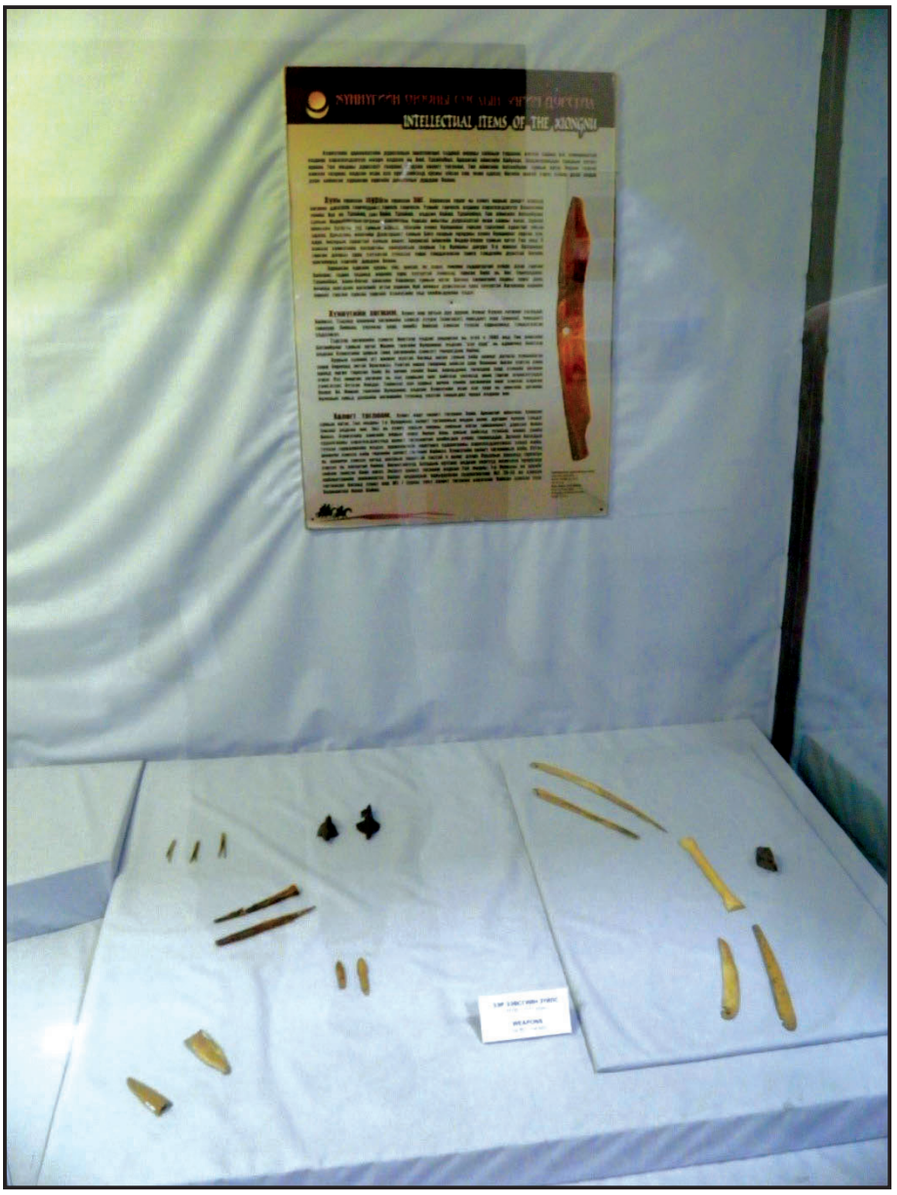
Appendix 4: Various artefacts of the Huns



National Museum of Mongolia, 24 July 2018.

Source: Hayrettin İhsan Erkoç Archive

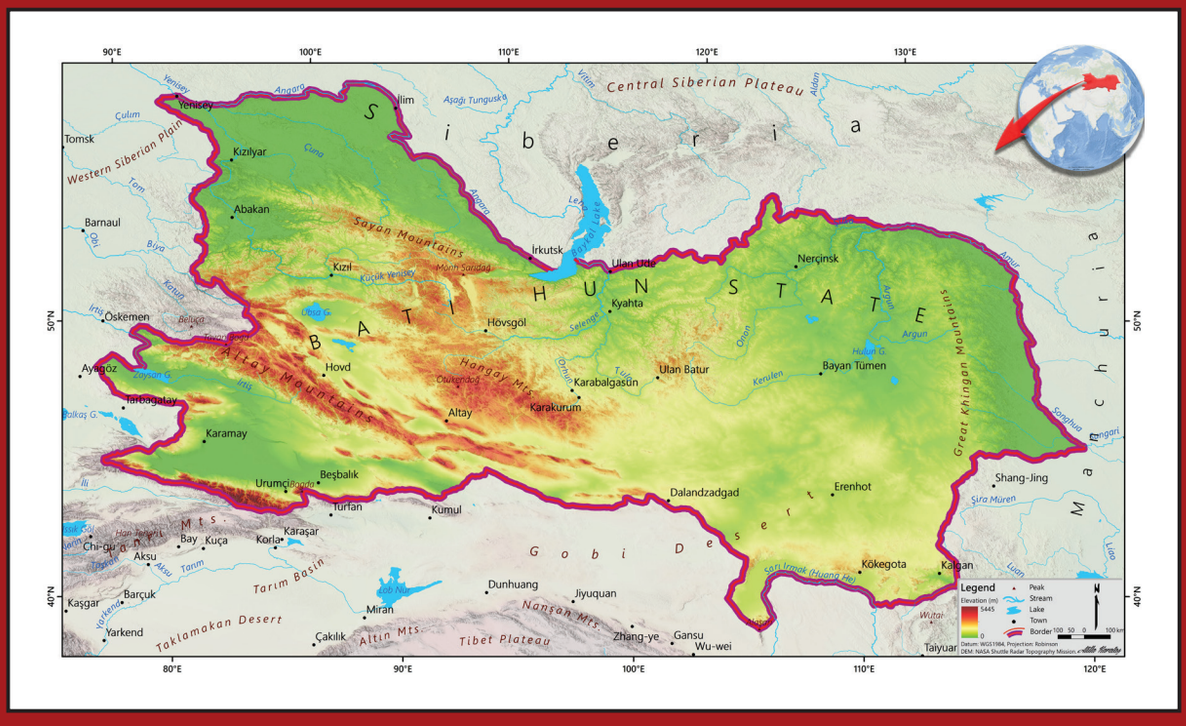
Appendix 5: Fragments of a Hun bow and arrowheads



National Museum of Mongolia, 24 July 2018.

Source: Hayrettin İhsan Erkoç Archive

The Western Hun State



Source: Atilla Karataş Collection

THE WESTERN HUN STATE

(48-137)

Tilla Deniz BAYKUZU*

The entity recognized in Turkish historical texts as the Western Huns is actually the Northern Huns, who arose from the second partition of the Great Asian Hun Empire in AD 48. The rationale for referring to them as the "Western Huns" remains unclear. Nevertheless, the environment that allowed the Northern Huns to progress westward through conquests in the southern and western areas of Hun territory, reaching as far as Gansu and the western regions of East Turkestan, may elucidate the origin of this term. Conversely, the Southern Huns cannot be incorporated into this state, as they lacked independence and resided under Chinese control. Notwithstanding, almost a century following their total political disintegration in 216, four states established by Huns residing in southern China are recognized as independent Hun entities. Consequently, it is imperative to investigate the entity referred to as the Western Huns—a term that is in fact a misnomer—specifically from the perspective of the second division of the Huns.

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The Second Fragmentation of the Asian Hun Confederation

At the time of the initial division, the Huns who established ties with China were under the leadership of Ch'an-yü Hu-han-yeh. Following his demise in 31 BCE, seven of his ten sons succeeded him on the Hunnic throne in chronological

order. This group of Huns, residing under Chinese suzerainty, commenced a gradual recovery over a period of roughly fifty years. During this time, they capitalized on the uprisings and disturbances that transpired. The Chinese president Mang in China asserted his claim to the imperial throne and proclaimed the establishment of a new dynasty, subsequently commencing to undertake substantial political roles. All these occurrences signify a phase during which the Huns resumed their political dominance in historical narratives. The most prominent individual of this era was the esteemed and astute ch'an-yü Yü (18–46). Assuming the throne with the title "Hu-tu-erh-shih Tao-kao Jo-ti," Yü proclaimed himself a second Motun ch'an-yü, aspiring to enhance and fortify the state akin to his predecessor. Wang Mang, a catalyst for discord between the Huns and the Chinese, met his demise in 23 CE due to an insurrection. Nevertheless, the challenges in China persisted as succession disputes began to cause concern. A prince backed by the Huns began to present a challenge to the new Chinese Emperor, the Emperor dispatched an envoy to Ch'an-yü Yü, conveying his intention to renew the non-aggression agreement. Ch'an-yü Yü articulated that they had aided the Chinese in overcoming Wang Mang, and declared that the Huns would no longer be subordinate to the Chinese, claiming parity in status with the Han Dynasty.[1] Once more, the Huns began to augment their strength, reminiscent of historical patterns, initiating numerous incursions into northern China. As the Huns expanded their dominance in Turkestan and the western territories, the formidable leader Yü perished. Following the demise of the ch'an-yü, his son Wu-ta-ti-hou 烏達鞮侯 (CE 48) ascended to the position of ch'an-yü. Nevertheless, when Yü's nephew Pi 比[2] asserted his entitlement to the throne, social unrest ensued throughout the nation. In the midst of this upheaval, the newly appointed ch'an-yü unexpectedly passed away within a year.

The Northern Huns

Pu-nu Chan-yü (46-Unknown)

Following the demise of Wu-ta-ti-hou Ch'an-yü, his sibling, the Left Wise Prince P'u-nu 蒲奴, inherited his position. During that precise period, a locust infestation severely impacted all grain, trees, and crops throughout Hun territory, leading to a significant famine. The nation experienced a significant economic crisis. Recognizing the diminished strength of the Huns, the tricky situation. Consequently,

1 Tilla Deniz Baykuzu, *Asya Hun İmparatorluğu*, Bilge Kültür Sanat Publications, Istanbul 2023, pp.152-154.

2 Wu-chu-liu Jo-ti is the son of Ch'an-yun.



they were compelled to negotiate a peace agreement with China and dispatched an envoy. From within this delegation, an individual named Li Mao 李茂 defected to China and clandestinely provided Chinese authorities with a map of the Hun state that had been entrusted to him by Pi.[3] Upon discovering, during a religious observance in the Huns' Dragon City in the fifth month, that Bi had provided the map of the Hun state to the Chinese, P'u-nu Ch'an-yü was overcome by intense anger. Pi's sibling was subsequently present alongside P'u-nu and, observing the ch'an-yü's fury, promptly conveyed a message to his brother. P'u-nu promptly mobilized for war with Pi and subsequently deployed a force of 10,000 soldiers against him. Upon learning of this matter, Pi mobilized a force of 50,000 individuals. Faced with such a substantial force, P'u-nu recognized his inability to be victorious and subsequently retreated. In the ensuing year, specifically in CE 48, eight Hunnic tribes endorsed Pi and conferred upon him the hereditary title "Hu-han-yeh" and proclaimed him ch'an-yü. Consequently, within a mere century, the Huns experienced division for the second time.

P'u-nu Ch'an-yü 蒲奴 *(46–?)* was the grandson of *Hu-han-yeh Ch'an-yü and the son of Hu-tu-erh-shih-tao-kao Juo-ti* 呼都而尸道皋若鞮 *(CE 18–46), also known as Yü Ch'an-yü*. He was the first ch'an-yü of the Northern Huns.

The dispute between the Northern and Southern Huns remained unresolved during this period. In 49 CE, the ch'an-yü of the Southern Huns, Pi, dispatched his brother to confront the Northern Huns. During this campaign, over ten thousand individuals were captured, and approximately 7,000 horses, as well as 10,000 cattle and sheep, were confiscated. Perturbed by the circumstances, the Northern Huns withdrew roughly 500 kilometers further northward. Subsequent to this triumph, the Southern Huns pledged their loyalty to China and were awarded considerable gifts and supplies by the Chinese government. Recognizing the worsening circumstances, P'u-nu deemed it advantageous to foster positive relations with China and repatriated several previously captured Chinese prisoners. He further emphasized that the border incursions were exclusively targeted at his adversaries, and not at the Chinese populace.[4]

In 50 CE, P'u-nu planned to dispatch goodwill envoys to the city of Wu-wei, situated in present-day Gansu Province, China. Nonetheless, the Chinese crown prince contended that as the Northern Huns no longer presented a threat of invading

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3 HHS 89. *Güney Hunları*, p.2942; Richard Rafe De Crespigny, "Hun Konfederasyonu'nun Bölünmesi ve Yıkılması", *Türkler,* I, Yeni Türkiye Publications, Ankara 2002, pp.751-752.

4 HHS后汉书、89, *Güney Hunları*, p.2943.

China, diplomatic relations could be initiated with them; however, such an action might antagonize their allies, the Southern Huns. As a result, the proposal was courteously rejected. In 52 CE, the Northern Huns once more dispatched emissaries to China. On this occasion, in addition to presenting gifts of furs, they were accompanied by representatives from the Western Regions. This situation was notably atypical, as the Chinese state regarded the city-states of the Western Regions as tributaries of the Han Dynasty, rather than as subjects of the Huns. Moreover, having ascertained that "ritual (禮)" and "music (樂)" represented harmony in Chinese culture, the Huns asserted that the gifts formerly provided to Hu-han-yeh had become antiquated and solicited a variety of musical instruments from China.[5] If they were able to procure these, it would demonstrate that China recognized the Northern Huns. However, the Palace Advisor Pan Piao (班彪, 3–54 CE)[6] advised that the Northern Huns were approaching the Chinese state out of their own self-interest, which made them appear weak. He suggested that while it would be imprudent to fully sever relations with the Northern Huns, it would be fitting to reciprocate their actions. As a result, the Chinese emperor adhered to this counsel and denied the appeal. Nevertheless, he bestowed upon the ch'an-yü 500 bolts of patterned silk fabric, along with a bow case and four arrows, while each of the two Hun envoys was presented with 400 bolts of patterned silk and a single sword.[7]

Historical documents produced merely a decade following this event suggest that the Northern Huns were progressively recuperating their strength, as is evidenced by their recurrent mention in relation to raiding expeditions. In the second

[5] Ying-shih Yü, "Hsiung-nu", *Erken İç Asya Tarihi*, ed. Denis Sinor, İletişim Publications, Istanbul 2003, p.202.

[6] This palace official named Pan Piao was actually a historian. However, his lasting mark on Chinese history is not through his works, but through his three children who made a significant impact on history. One of them was General Pan Ch'ao (班超), who conquered East Turkestan — a long-standing dream of China. Another was Pan Ku (班固), who authored the Han Shu (Book of Han), a famous historical record of the Han Dynasty. The third was his daughter Pan Chao (班昭), who completed the Han Shu after her older brother was unable to finish it.Yuejing Liu (刘跃进) wrote: "Ban Biao and the Hexi Culture at the Turn of the Two Han Dynasties" (班彪与两汉之际的河西文).

[7] Ayşe Onat, "Han Döneminde Hun-Çin Ekonomik İlişkileri (MÖ.206-MS.220)", *Belleten*, Vol.LI/200 (Ağustos 1987), pp.621-622; In 52, this embassy delegation brought horses and fur clothes to the Chinese government. In addition to re-establishing a peace treaty, the delegation also asked for musical instruments. They also requested that Turkestan guests from the western regions be received with them. According to Mori, Huns were buying furs from hunting tribes in Manchuria and Siberia and selling these goods to China through Turkestanis, i.e. Sogdian merchants. Masao Mori, "Soğdluların Orta Asya'daki Faaliyetleri" *Belleten*, XLVII (1983), p.347.



month of the year 62 CE, the Northern Huns, accompanied by a cavalry contingent of 7,000, initiated incursions first into Wu-yüan in northeastern China, and subsequently into the city of Yün-chung to the north, successfully seizing a significant number of captives and animals. Nonetheless, they soon faced the Southern Huns, who had acquired livestock, provisions, and financial aid from the Chinese. Following interactions undertaken in partnership with the Chinese General Ma Hsiang, the Southern Huns effectively induced the Northern Huns to relocate westward to the Hsi-ho region, particularly to the western shores of the Yellow River.[8]

Five years after the death of the Southern Hunnic ch'an-yü, Ch'ang Ch'an-yü 胡邪尸逐侯鞮單于 (Unknown–85) assumed the role. Throughout this period, the Northern Huns launched several incursions across the borders. In the following year, they sent delegates to China with the aim of obtaining authorization to engage in trade. In the expectation that the intrusions would cease, the Chinese agreed to this requirement. The reconciliation between the Northern Huns and the Chinese progressed to the point of establishing diplomatic relations. This development engendered significant discontent among the Southern Huns. They swiftly sought to commence an insurrection and clandestinely engaged with the Northern Huns, requesting military support. The Northern Huns reacted by deploying 2,000 cavalry; however, they retreated upon realizing that the Chinese had taken preemptive actions, thereafter engaging in raids in the surrounding areas.[9]

In the year 73, the Southern Huns participated as auxiliary forces in the extensive conflict instigated by the Chinese against the Northern Huns. During the period when the Chinese forces were actively engaged with the Northern Huns in the northwest and west, the Southern Huns suffered from famine caused by locust infestations. In 84, acting on intelligence that certain individuals associated with the Northern Huns had entered Chinese territory with their livestock for trading purposes, the ch'an-yü of the Southern Huns mobilized a force to confiscate the animals and expel their owners beyond the border. The Chinese, having resolved their conflicts with the Northern Huns, began to encounter the intrusions of the Southern Huns. Accordingly, a report was submitted to the court contending that the seized animals should be returned to avoid a re-escalation of tensions with the Northern Huns. The emperor sanctioned this proposal, and its provisions were communicated to the Southern Huns.[10]

8 HHS 89, p.2948.

9 HHS 89, p.2949.

10 This condition of payment was later applied to those who were slaughtered and captured in turn. Wolfram Eberhard, "Muahhar Han Devrinde (MS.25-MS.220) Hun Tarihine Kronolojik Bir Bakış", *Belleten,* 16 (1940), p.358.

THE WESTERN HUN STATE

Subsequent to the demise of Yü ch'an-yü, Proto-Mongol groups, such as the Wu-huan and Hsien-pi, who had previously been under his governance, initiated an attack against the Huns, thereby forcing their northward displacement. In other words, the entirety of the Gobi region lacked any human population. As a result of the growing prominence of the Proto-Mongol tribes, the Huns, relinquishing their eastern roots, directed their ambitions towards the urban hubs of Eastern and Western Turkestan and shifted their trajectory towards the west.[11] Nonetheless, the Chinese state intervened swiftly to prevent the Huns from solidifying their influence in the western territories. Historical documentation from the year 70 reveals that the Northern Huns persistently conducted incursions along the borders of China. In response, the Chinese court initiated the assessment of various strategies aimed at alleviating these attacks, focusing especially on the ideas presented by a bureaucrat referred to as Keng Ping. In his view, the Huns were not susceptible to influence through gifts or monetary offerings. Consequently, the sole method to subjugate them was via combat. He championed the continuation of the policies of the previous Emperor Wu-ti by initiating hostilities against the Huns and forging connections with the western regions. The means to eradicate the Huns involved the subjugation of the western states. Consequently, their right flank would be secured initially, followed by the elimination of the Hu-yen tribe of the Huns residing in I-wu (Hami), the neutralization of the Huns' left wing, and ultimately, an assault on the central position of the Huns. Furthermore, in the scenario of the amalgamation of the two Hunnic states, precedence would be accorded to the eradication of the northern region initially. The strategy was endorsed and executed by Emperor Ming-ti (28-75).

During this time, the Silk Road trading city-states located in the Tarim Basin had attained considerable significance. In the north were the Huns, to the east the Chinese, and to the west the Kushan Empire of the Yüeh-chih, which had surrounded this area. The subjugation of this region by the Chinese was executed by three distinguished generals. Commanders Keng Ping 耿秉, Tou Ku 竇固, and Pan Ch'ao 班超 (32-102) devised a strategy to systematically conquer these states, guided by the proverb, "a tiger cub that does not venture into the tiger's den will never capture a tiger!" The Chinese forces mobilized with four divisions. A force of 44,000 cavalry commenced their advance against the Northern Huns. Firstly, in the year 73, they initiated an assault on the Hu-yen tribe of the Huns residing near Barköl (P'u-lei) to the north of the Heavenly Mountains. At the conclusion of the engagement, the Hu-yen chieftain was vanquished, and thousands of his soldiers perished.[12]

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[11] Bahaeddin Ögel, *Büyük Hun İmparatorluğu Tarih II*, Kültür Bakanlığı Publications, Ankara 1981, p.253.

[12] HHS, 47 Pan Ch'ao Biyografisi, pp.1572-73.; TCTC, 1459.

They followed the others as far as Barköl. Subsequently, they successfully seized İ-wu-lu, commonly referred to as Hami, which is the city of Kumul situated to the north of modern-day Lop Nor. Subsequently, they established a Chinese settlement in the area. Subsequently, during a reconnaissance operation in the Shan-shan State situated to the southwest, they discovered that the Shan-shan King was engaging in negotiations with Hun envoys regarding strategies directed against the Chinese. Consequently, with a force of 36 officers, the Chinese General Pan Ch'ao initiated an unexpected nighttime assault, incinerating the tents and eliminating all the Huns. The leader of the Hun delegation was dispatched to the Shan-shan King, who, being alarmed, promptly acknowledged Chinese sovereignty.[13]

The subsequent year, the aforementioned three commanders collectively assaulted the Front and Rear Ch'ü-shih (Ch'e-shih), referring to the region of Turfan. Upon Keng Ping's arrival, the King of Rear Ch'e-shih promptly exited the fortress and submitted by kneeling at the feet of the general's horse. After receiving this information, the son who held the title of King of Turfan promptly capitulated. Thus, a Chinese garrison was left stationed in both Ch'e-shih regions.[14]



Source: Tilla Deniz Baykuzu, Asya Hun İmparatorluğu, Bilge Kultur Sanat Publications, Istanbul 2023, p.159.

13 TCTC, pp.1460-1461.

14 TCTC, p.1474.

During that period, the northern oversight of the Silk Road was administered by the King of Yarkand, whereas the southern control was maintained by the King of Hotan. Both entities received backing from the Huns. When the King of Yarkand, specifically Sha-ch'e 莎车, captured Shu-lo 疏勒, commonly known as Kashgar, in the year 73, Pan Ch'ao was tasked with addressing the ensuing circumstances. In 76, Pan Ch'ao initially arrived in Hotan. The King, emboldened by his success and responding to the requirements of the Huns, treated the Chinese envoys with considerable disdain. Infuriated by this, Pan Ch'ao abruptly ordered the execution of the shaman, who served as the King's principal advisor. This prospect greatly alarmed the King, leading him to express his desire to submit to Chinese authority. To demonstrate his commitment, he orchestrated the execution of the Hun envoys.[15]

Pan Ch'ao, who successfully altered the circumstances in Hotan to benefit China, prioritized the objective of repatriating the Huns who controlled this trade route back to Mongolia. In the execution of this plan, the discontented city-states often orchestrated uprisings and endeavored to oppose him. On occasion, even during the preliminary planning phases of rebellions, Pan Ch'ao identified them and swiftly enacted stringent suppression measures. He suppressed the insurrections that erupted in Kashgar in 80 and 87, and in Yarkand in 88 and allied with the Wusun. In 84, Chung, the King of Kashgar and Pan Ch'ao's own man, joined forces with the Yüeh-chih, the people of Yarkand, and some other groups to start a rebellion. In 87, the King of Kashgar was defeated by Pan Ch'ao. The king appeared to accept the situation for a while, then came to meet Pan Ch'ao with a large entourage. At the feast, after eating and drinking, Pan Ch'ao suddenly made a forward move and beheaded the King of Kashgar, thereby suppressing the rebellion at hand.[16]

You-liu Ch'an-yü優留 (?-87)

The sources do not provide information on when P'u-nu Ch'an-yü died or when You Liu Ch'an-yü, who succeeded him, came to the thone, nor about the political events during his rule. One of the rare pieces of information about this

[15] TCTC, pp.1472, 1475.

[16] Rene Grousset, *Bozkır İmparatorluğu*, trans. M. Reşat Uzmen, Ötüken Publishers, Istanbul 2006, pp.71-74.



period dates to 84.17 That year, we see that the Hun Ch'an-yü sent an envoy to the Governor of Wu-wei City in Kansu, expressing their desire to trade freely. The Chinese court not only did not reject this request but also ordered the Military Governor of Wu-wei to send a welcoming delegation for the Huns. The Northern Hun caravan came with princes and 10,000 cattle and sheep to trade.[17]

Around this time, the Wu-huan and Hsien-pi tribes, supported by the Chinese, began pressuring the eastern wing of the Northern Huns. Adding to these troubles were natural disasters and internal conflicts, leading two major Northern Hun groups to surrender to China in 83 and 85. Consequently, the Chinese government accepted the Northern Huns' request to trade in the west, but after some time, under pressure from the Southern Huns, this policy was halted.[18] While the Chinese armies were occupied with the Northern Huns in the northwest and west, the Southern Huns faced famine due to locust disasters. It is known that in the autumn of 87, this ch'an-yü was killed by raiding Hsien-pi tribes. The death of the ch'an-yü threw the Northern Huns into great chaos, and a Northern Hun group consisting of 58 tribes, 200,000 people, and 8,000 soldiers, including Ch'ü-lan 屈兰, Chu-pei 储卑, and Hu-tu-hsü 胡都须, came north of the Yellow River and took refuge with the Southern Huns.[19]

Pei Ch'an-yü 北 (88-91)

In the year a new ch'an-yü assumed leadership of the Northern Huns, a similar transition occurred among the Southern Huns, with T'un-tu-ho (屯屠河) Ch'an-yü ascending to the Southern Hun throne. Seeking to capitalize on the internal strife among the Northern Huns, T'un-tu-ho Ch'an-yü petitioned the Chinese court for their incorporation into the Southern Huns. As a result, the Chinese military, under the command of General Tou Hsien (竇憲, d. ca. 92 AD), launched a campaign against the Northern Huns in what became known as the "Battle of Mount Chih-luo" (稽落山之戰), which took place in the tenth month of the year 88.[20] Tou Hsien, the brother of the Chinese Emperor Chang-te, was

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17 Ayşe Onat, *op.cit.*

18 Richard Rafe De Crispigny, *op.cit*., p.753.

19 HHS.89, *Güney Hunları*, p.2951.

20 Ho和帝20 Meanwhile, the Chinese Emperor Chang died in 88 and instead of 10 years old and began to be ruled by his brother Tou Hsien. For information about empress Chang-te Huang Hou章德皇后için see HHS., 10A, p.415.



appointed Cavalry Units General and was assisted by Central Army Commander Keng Ping 耿秉. Each led 4,000 cavalrymen. The Southern Hun's Left Ku-li Bey Shih Tzu joined the campaign with a battalion of soldiers from Sho-fang Chih-lu-sai 雞鹿塞. Southern Hun Ch'an-yü T'un-tu-ho proceeded to the campaign from the Man-i Valley 满夷谷 with more than ten thousand soldiers. General Tu-liao Teng Hung 鄧鴻 also joined with 8,000 Ch'iang soldiers from Chou-yang Sai 稠陽塞, and Left Wise Bey An-kuo joined with a division from the same place.

All units gathered at Chuo-yeh Mountain 涿邪山. They lined up the forces in a single line. The Chinese commanders Ssu-ma Keng Kui 耿夔 and Keng T'an 耿譚 commanded the Southern Hun's Left Ku-li Bey and the Hu-yen Bey Hsü-tzu 須訾 units. The Southern Hun troops, led by the Chinese commanders, attacked the Northern Huns at Chih-luo Mountain 稽落山, today known as Ikh Bayan Mountain in Mongolia, with more than ten thousand soldiers and defeated them. The Northern Hun Ch'an-yü and some of the clans chose to follow him and fled to the Kobdo [21] region, located in the west of present-day Mongolia. Forces were killed, more than one million animals were seized, and the 81 clans totaling 200,000 people, led by the Beys Wen-tu-hsü 温犢須, Jeh-chu 日逐, Wen-wu 温吾, and Fu-ch'ü 夫渠 Bey Liu-t'i 柳鞮, surrendered.

Chinese General Tou Hsien, in celebration of his victory, erected the "Yen-jan Mountain Stele" north of the Hangay Mountains, west of today's Karakorum.[22] Pan-ku, a well-known historian, penned this work. The inscription illustrates the transition of all territories formerly controlled by Motun into Chinese

[21] Known as "Sangiim Kerem" during the Ch'ing Dynasty of the Manchus, this region is now called "Khovd".

[22] Mount Yen-jan is today Mount Hangay.

possession, as well as the subsequent destruction of the Dragon City Lung-ch'eng, revered by the Huns.[23]

Following this setback, the Northern Huns dispatched the Right Wen-yü-t'i bey, brother of the ch'an-yü, as a hostage to the Chinese court; however, the Chinese declined to accept the offering, citing the absence of the ch'an-yü himself. Accordingly, the ch'an-yü consented to accompany him personally. Nevertheless, during that period, the Southern Huns, whose military and economic capabilities had concurrently augmented alongside their allied tribes, initiated an offensive commanded by the Sol Ku-li bey Shih-tzu, employing 8,000 light cavalry. The Chinese court dispatched Keng Tan 耿譚 to aid him. Upon reaching Chuo-yeh 涿邪山 Mountain, they deposited their belongings and divided into two groups. The left wing maneuvered around Hsi-hai from the north to arrive north of Ho-yün 河雲, while the right wing circumvented the Tanrı Mountains from the west of the Hsiung-nu River to ultimately reach the Kan-wei River 甘微河.[24] The two forces converged at this location and initiated a nocturnal assault on the Northern Huns, resulting in their defeat. Ch'an-yü sustained injuries; however, his troops assisted him in mounting a horse, facilitating his subsequent escape. The Chinese swiftly dispatched a military force to the Altay Mountains following the ascension of ch'an-yü. Ch'an-yü retreated to an undisclosed location, while Chinese forces apprehended his mother, Yen-chih, along with his family, confiscating his treasury and jade seals. Eight thousand individuals perished. With the individuals who had surrendered, the Southern Huns now possessed a population amounting to 237,300, comprising 34,000 families and 54,170 soldiers.[25]

The destination of the Northern Hun ch'an-yü remains uncertain, however, fragmentary evidence suggests that they traversed the Altai Mountains and advanced westward toward K'ang-chü, while those who separated from him founded the Yüeh-pan.[26]

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23 HHS 23, Tou Jung Biyografisi, p.814.; Richard Rafe De Crispigny, op.cit.; Bahaeddin Ögel, *Büyük Hun İmparatorluğu Tarihi II*, Ankara 1981, pp.308-313.

24 Today this river is the Ulungur River in East Turkestan.

25 HHS.89, *Güney Hunları*, p.2953; L. N. Gumilev, *Hunlar*, Selenge Publications, Istanbul 2002, pp.234-235.

26 The Yueh-pan State was north-west of the Wusuns. Its ancestors were originally tribes of the Northern Huns ch'an-yü. After Ch'an-yü was defeated by the Chinese army, they were subsequently pursued by General Tou Hsien of the Chariots and Cavalry. Ch'an-yü fled up the Altai Mountain to K'ang-chü. The weaker ones could not go with him and settled in Chiu-tzu, north of present-day Ku-cha. Their customs, traditions and language are the same

The state 悅般 was north of Kuça. As the Northern Hun tribes migrated with a population exceeding 200,000 to the Ili Valley, Yedi-su, and Eastern Kazakhstan, the territories they left behind were subsequently inhabited by the Xianbei. This process undoubtedly instigated a renewed migration and expansion of the Northern Huns across the steppes, stretching from the western region of East Turkestan to the area north of the Caspian Sea.[27]

Yü-ch'ü-ch'üan Ch'an-yü 於除鞬 (91-93)

The brother of the hastily fleeing ch'an-yü, Prince Sa Lu-li Yü-ch'ü-ch'uan, proclaimed himself the new ch'an-yü following his elder brother's departure. He dispatched a representative to China to advocate for a peaceful resolution. The Chinese commander Tou Hsien, motivated by the desire to preserve stability among the Huns in the northern regions, provided his support.[28] Nevertheless, after a period, this commander was apprehended and executed. The ch'an-yü, having lost his most significant advocate, became apprehensive and withdrew to the north. However, the Chinese, interpreting this withdrawal as an act of rebellion, employed deception against the Northern Huns by dispatching 1,000 cavalry under the leadership of a commander named Wang Fu 王輔, ostensibly to pursue ongoing negotiations, before launching an attack. The ch'an-yü and all his troops were slain.[29]

In the Western Regions, Pan Ch'ao's endeavors to establish dominance over the area persisted. In 88, the Chinese military achieved a significant triumph by overcoming a contingent of 50,000 troops. Consequently, Yarkend was also taken. Ultimately, only the states of Kucha and Karashar persisted.

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as the Kao-ch'elar. they are very clean. They grow the front of their hair up to their eyebrows and cut it at that level, wash three times a day, gargle and then eat or drink. At first they lived in peace with the Juan-Juans. In 429, Hun ch'an-yus went to Juan-Juan country with a few thousand soldiers to establish co-operation, but when he saw that Juan-Juan men did not wash their clothes, did not comb and tie their hair and did not wash their hands, and that the women picked their noses with a tool and licked what they took out, he was very disgusted. He was enraged at the ministers for bringing him to such a place, immediately returned back as he had come and made political and military co-operation with the Tabgachs against the Juan-Juans. Pei-shih 97, p.3219; Bahaeddin Ögel, *Büyük Hun İmparatorluğu Tarihi II,* Ankara 1981, pp.316-318; S.G. Klyashtorny-T. İ. Sultanov, *Kazakistan, Türkün Üç Bin Yılı*, Selenge Publications, İstan- bul 2004, p.80.

27 Egemen Çağrı Mızrak, "Batı Türkistan Hunlarında Görülen Sosyo-Kültürel Gelenekler ve Dinler (MS. IV-VII. Yüzyıl)", *GTTAD*, V/9 (Ocak 2023), pp.19-32.

28 TCTC, pp.1528-1529.

29 HHS.89, *Güney Hunları*, p.2954.

Incensed by the Chinese denial of a royal bride, the Kushan monarch dispatched an army towards Kucha in 90. Aided by insiders, Pan Ch'ao successfully annihilated all provisions along the Kushan forces' path. Consequently, the Kushans withdrew to avoid deteriorating into a more precarious situation. Notwithstanding the circumstances, in 91 CE, Kucha, Aksu, and Uç Turfan ultimately capitulated to Pan Ch'ao. Pan Ch'ao was conferred the title "Governor General of Central Asia" by the Chinese court as a form of recognition. Notwithstanding the aforementioned circumstances, rebellions persisted in Karashar. In 94, assisted by the forces of Kucha and Shan-shan, Pan Ch'ao launched an assault on Karashar, resulting in the death of over 5,000 individuals. An estimated 15,000 individuals were taken into slavery, while 300,000 livestock, encompassing both large and small animals, were confiscated. All regions within the Tarim Basin were by this time subject to Chinese authority. Pan Ch'ao concluded his service, returned to China, and passed away in 102.[30]

Feng-hou Ch'an-yü 逢侯 (94-118)

In 88 AD, T'un-t'u-ho 屯屠何, the sibling of Ch'ang Ch'an-yü and successor to the Southern Hun ch'an-yü Hsüan, ascended to the throne with the title "Hsiu-lan shi-chu hou-di." This newly appointed ch'an-yü petitioned the Chinese court for a conclusive resolution to the protracted and arduous conflict between the Northern and Southern Huns, with the objective of subjugating the Northern Huns and integrating them with the Southern Huns to form a unified state. In the subsequent year, during the Chih-luo battle conducted for this objective, the Northern Huns were vanquished. The Northern Huns suffered a loss of three thousand soldiers and an immeasurable number of animals during the conflict. Although 200,000 individuals capitulated, an additional group withdrew to Lake Wu-pu-sa. Consequently, the population of the Southern Huns, inclusive of individuals acquired under their governance, had attained 34,000 families, while their military strength totaled 50,000.

Hsiu-lan shi-chu hou-ti, who ruled over the Southern Hun kingdom for a five-year period, passed away in 93 AD. The populace anticipated that Shih-tzu (Arslan) 師子, a well-educated, resolute, and intelligent warrior, would succeed to the throne. Nevertheless, in accordance with tradition, it was not his turn but rather that of his uncle An-kuo, who was largely unfamiliar to the populace. Consequently,

[30] Rene Grousset, *Bozkır İmparatorluğu*, Ötüken Publications, Istanbul 1999, s.74.

Pi Ch'an-yü's son, An-kuo, assumed leadership of the Southern Huns in 93 AD and designated Shih-tzu as the "Left Chu-ch'i Bey."[31] While the populace favored Shih-tzu, the Northern Hun factions that had recently integrated with the Southern Huns endorsed An-kuo and resisted Shih-tzu. This occurred as Shih-tzu and his troops consistently targeted refugees from Northern Hun, eliciting their animosity. An-kuo, conversely, experienced envy towards his nephew as a result of his own constituents' endorsement of Shih-tzu and their antagonism directed towards him. Furthermore, Shih-tzu escalated this tension by asserting illness and abstaining from participation in the Dragon City (Ejder Şehri) councils. An-kuo became progressively apprehensive regarding this circumstance.[32]

Tu Ch'ung 杜崇[33], The Central Palace General of China and the newly appointed ch'an-yü were unable to establish a harmonious relationship. The ch'an-yü initiated a plan to remove the Left Wise Bey Shih-tzu and the Left Chü-ch'ü Bey Liu Li, whom he perceived as threats to his own position. In acknowledging this, the aforementioned pair dispatched letters in opposition to the ch'an-yü to the Emperor. Upon acquiring knowledge of the ch'an-yü's intentions, Tu Ch'ung communicated the details of the plot to the Chinese Emperor, indicating that, as a result, the right wing Huns were deploying troops to aid An-kuo. Consequently, the Chinese military was required to mobilize preparations in the regions of Hsi-ho, Shang-chün, and An-ting. Following careful deliberation and discussions with his advisors, the Chinese Emperor instructed Tu Ch'ung and Chu-wei, the Liao General, to unite their forces and launch an offensive against the ch'an-yü. An-kuo expressed considerable astonishment upon learning of the Chinese army's mobilization at midnight; however, he swiftly regained composure and, with marked indignation, assembled his forces to apprehend Shih-tzu. The Shih-tzu, upon learning that the Hun ch'an-yü was advancing in his direction, promptly returned and fortified himself within the city of Man Pai 曼柏城.[34] An-kuo initiated a siege of the city walls; however, he was unable to breach them. Shortly thereafter, the ch'an-yü was overcome by the allied forces of Tu Ch'ung and Chu-wei originating from Wu-yüan. The ch'an-yü's uncle, Kutluk Hsi-Wei 骨都侯喜為, surrendered out of apprehension that failure to do so would result in his death, subsequently

[31] Sol Bilge Beyi

[32] HHS 89, p.2954.

[33] HHS 89, *Güney Hunları*, p.2955; TCTC 48, p.1540.

[34] This city was located on the border territory of China and the Huns, in the former 胜州 Hsin-chou region.[35] HHS 89, *Güney Hunları*, p.2955.



capturing An-kuo and delivering him to the opposing army. Consequently, An-kuo met his demise.[35]

The Northern Huns, expressing dissatisfaction with the accession of the Southern Hun ch'an-yü Shih-tzu,联合了 15 tribes totaling more than 200,000 individuals in rebellion. In reaction, China deployed a force of 40,000 soldiers consisting of Hsien-pi and Wu-huan troops and successfully vanquished the Northern Huns. Feng-hou, who originated from the Southern Huns, initially mobilized his constituents before promptly retreating in a northerly direction. Despite being pursued by the Chinese military, they remained elusive. The Northern Huns proclaimed Feng Hou, the offspring of the preceding ch'an-yü T'un-t'u-hou, as their ch'an-yü and acknowledged him as their leader. In 95, Feng Hou deserted the Chinese army and traversed the Yellow River. A decade subsequently, Feng Hou was observed to have established residence in Tun-huang and endeavored to cultivate stronger relations with China; however, due to the Chinese court's inattention, the Hsien-pi ultimately established themselves on the territories of the Northern Huns, compelling the latter to migrate further westward.

In 104, the Northern Huns dispatched an emissary to China, conveying their aspiration to subordinate themselves to the Chinese authority. The Chinese exchanged reciprocal gifts, however, they exhibited a lack of enthusiasm for the proposal. The proposal was reiterated in the subsequent year. On this occasion, they conveyed their intention to dispatch their heir as a hostage in conjunction with the presented gifts. The Chinese court remained unresponsive. In 107, Feng-hou initiated an assault on the western regional garrison of China, successfully seizing control of these territories. Furthermore, he disrupted the boundaries of the Eastern Han Dynasty over a decade. Despite the favorable circumstances, in 118, the Northern Hun tribes experienced significant devastation as a result of an unexpected assault by the Hsien-pi armies; their forces were scattered, and the majority ultimately surrendered. Feng-hou, accompanied by a small force of a few hundred men, arrived at the city of Shou-fang and surrendered to Chinese authority. The Chinese authorities established him and his adherents in Yu-chou and its vicinity.[36]

In 118, the Southern Huns quelled the uprising of the Ch'iang tribes. In addition to suppressing the uprising, they apprehended the remaining forces of the Northern Hun leader Feng Hou in the area and surrendered them to the Chinese authorities. Subsequently, additional Northern Hun tribes integrated with them

[35] HHS 89, *Güney Hunları*, s.2955.

[36] HHS 89, *Güney Hunları*, p.2958.

under the designation of Hsien-pi. Consequently, the traditional territory of the Huns progressively came under the control of the ascendant Hsien-pi tribes. In 119, the Chinese designated an official known as Su-pan 索班 to serve as the Military Governor of Tun-huang, with his headquarters located at I-wu, which corresponds to modern-day Hami. Apprehensive about these developments, the King of Ch'e-shih capitulated. In order to sustain dominance over the region, the Northern Huns launched an assault on Hami, assassinated the designated official, and expelled the previous monarch. The renowned general and conqueror of the Western Regions, Pan-ch'ao, initiated an offensive against Yarkend in 88, thereby facilitating the subsequent conquest of the southern Silk Road. The complete domination of the Western Regions had now become more attainable. Consequently, his son, the Commander of the Western Regions, Pan Yung 班勇[37], undertook his final duties in 124. Initially, he engaged the Northern Huns, and in the same year, he attacked the Ch'e-shih Rear State, assassinated their monarch, and installed a figure named Chia T'e-nu 加特奴 as the new ruler. Liu-chung 柳中, currently known as southwest Çerçen, served as his operational base.

In 126, Pan Yung travelled to Karaşar and took seventeen settlements, including Yarkend and Hotan on the southern route.[38] During that same winter, Pan Yung initiated an offensive against the Hu-yen tribe of the Huns, inflicting upon them a substantial defeat. In the subsequent year, acting under imperial directive, Chang Lang, the Military Governor of Tun-huang, was dispatched with 3,000 troops, tasked with joining Pan Yung's contingent of 40,000 to execute an offensive aimed at diminishing the strength of the Huns' northern forces. Chang Lang was tasked with progressing through the northern path via the Tian Shan Mountains, while Pan Yung was directed to travel along the southern route, with intentions to converge at Karaşar. Chang Lang, motivated by a quest for autonomy, arrived in Karaşar sooner than anticipated and successfully captured the city. Upon hearing this, the Emperor ordered the revocation of Pan Yung's rank.

In 134, the forces of the Later Ch'e-shih engaged the Hu-yen chieftain of the Northern Huns in proximity to the Ch'ang-wu-lu 閶吾陆 Valley, inflicting a significant defeat. They executed Ch'an-yü's mother, wives, daughters, and hundreds of notables, confiscating arms and over 100,000 animals. The subsequent year saw

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37 Pan-yung was the son of Chinese General Pan Ch'ao from his marriage with the daughter of the King of Kashgar.

38 HHS 88, *Hsi-yu Bölümü*, pp.2912-2913; Douglas A. Hitch, "Kushan Tarim Domination", *Central Asiatic Journal*, 32/3-4 (1988), pp.178-179.

the Hu-yen leader initiate a counter-offensive against them. The governor of Tun-huang intervened to provide assistance; however, the Huns ultimately emerged victorious. In 137, the Military Governor of Tun-huang, P'ei-tsen 裴岑, departed from I-wu and engaged the Northern Huns, successfully assassinating the Hu-yen chieftain and severing the ears of his entire tribe.[39] Moreover, as a symbol of his truimph, he erected a stele in Barköl. Consequently, the superiority of the Northern Huns and their dominance over the western territories came to an end. Afterward, the Northern Huns migrated in large groups, abandoning their lands moved to the southern Kazakh steppes.[40]

Certain historians assert that the dissolution of the Northern Huns led to the emergence of a tribal confederation, known as uruk unity, among the Kyrgyz tribes inhabiting the region surrounding the Yenisei River in the north. Having existed under Hunnic dominion for an extended period, the Kyrgyz attained complete independence with the disintegration of the Northern Huns and subsequently initiated the formation of the Kyrgyz "tribal confederation," which would endure for several centuries.[41] In 151, the Northern Huns, accompanied by 3,000 cavalry, launched an assault on Hami and successfully seized the city. Neither reinforcements from the central government nor the military authorities of Tun-huang were able to overcome them.[42] In 155, the Northern Huns residing in the Kingan area were subjugated by the Xianbei, whereas in 156, the remnants of the Northern Huns assimilated with the oasis polities in the Tarim Basin and conducted incursions into the Gansu region. It is proposed that the Huns observed in Southern Russia during the 4th century originated from the Northern Huns. According to certain historians, while the ch'an-yü royal lineage of the Huns moved westward, they persisted in the vicinity of Issyk-Kul Lake and founded the Yueh-pan State, whereas the subordinate classes—likely a blend of Huns and Xianbei—migrated towards Europe.[43]

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39 Wolfram Eberhard, *op.cit.,* p.370.

40 İbrahim Kafesoğlu, *Türk Milli Kültürü*, Istanbul 1977, pp.47-48.

41 Aygül Akmatova, "Modern Dönem Kırgız Urukları ve Kırgız Diyalekt Coğrafyası", *Turkish Studies International Periodical For the Languages, Literature and History of Turkish or Turkic*, III/3 (2008), p.10.

42 Ahmet Taşağıl, *Bozkırların İlk İmparatorluğu, Hunlar*, Yeditepe Publications, Istanbul 2024, p.232.

43 Pulat Otkan, *Tarihçinin Kayıtlarına (Shı Ji) Göre Hunlar*, İş Bankası Kültür Publications, Istanbul 2017, p.21.

THE WESTERN HUN STATE

A significant component of the cultural existence of the Northern Huns is represented by their kurgans (burial mounds). The most notable characteristic of these kurgans is the similarity in their construction to that of the Hunnic kurgans located to the north of the Gobi Desert. Nevertheless, it is plausible that, in the course of their migrations, they interacted with diverse groups or were affected by the indigenous cultures of the native populations in the regions where they established settlements. The kurgans exhibit two distinct forms: circular and rectangular. The substantial kurgans exhibit a rectangular form, whereas the typical, commonplace ones are predominantly circular. The walls of the interment chambers are constructed using stones, exhibiting a similarity to those utilized by the Northern Huns of the Gobi. Nonetheless, the kurgans associated with the Northern Huns in the Gobi region are typically of modest height. The interment sites are designated for individual burials, with the deceased positioned supine and the head oriented towards the north. Wooden materials are used in the construction of the coffin. In contrast, the kurgans associated with the Northern Huns have increased in height and size, and collective burial practices are noted. Moreover, the heads of the deceased positioned on their backs are oriented southward or westward.[44]

One of the most significant of these kurgans is the No. 3 kurgan located in the Ch'a-wu-hu 察吾 Valley. It resides within the Ch'a-wu-hu depression in the municipality of Ho-chin 和静, commonly referred to as Hotun-Sumbul, located in East Turkestan. In terms of form and funerary artifacts, this tomb exhibits a significant resemblance to the Hun kurgans of the Han dynasty. Examination of the human skeletal remains discovered at the site has ascertained that the individuals interred within the tomb exhibited anthropological traits indicative of European ancestry. There are 338 graves in total at two distinct locations in the eastern and western regions. By 1988, a total of 20 specimens had been unearthed. The tomb is a circular edifice constructed from accumulated stones, exhibiting a height that varies from 20 to 40 cm above ground, with certain portions extending to 40–60 cm. The burial chambers differ in structure and design, including wooden floor burial chambers, wooden coffins, and burial chambers with stone walls. Sheep and horse skulls are often found inside the tombs oriented along the east-west axis. Artifacts such as wave-patterned rings, bronze mirrors, belt buckles, belt pendants, rings, and earrings have been discovered. Wooden objects include trays and combs.

[44] Li-ch'ing MA利清马, "Ts'ung K'ao-ku Hsüeh Wen-hua Te Fan-pu Yü Ch'üan-po K'an Hsiung-nu Chiang-yü Te Pien-ch'ien 从考古学文化的分布与传播看匈奴疆域的变迁" *Journal of Inner Mongolia University (Humanities and Social Sciences)* 内蒙古大学学报(人文社会科学版), Jan, 2005, vol. 37/1 (2005) p.18.

Additionally, spoons made of bone and beads of pearls and stones were excavated. A small amount of gold jewelry, silver earrings, and mostly silk textiles have also been excavated. These graves date back to the Eastern Han Dynasty period.[45]



[45] Li-ch'ing MA利清马, *Yuan Hsiung-nu, Hsiung-nu* 原匈奴、匈奴, Nei Meng-ku Ta-hsüeh Ch'u-pan Shih 内蒙古大学出版社 , Hohhot 2004, pp.66-67.

NORTHERN XİONGNU CHANYUS

TiTLE	NAME	DURATION OF REIGN	DATE OF ACCESSION	DATE OF DEATH	FAMILIAL ORIGIN
P'U-NU 蒲奴	As per title	Unknown	46	Unknown	Brother of Hu-tu
YOU-LİU 優留	As per title	Unknown	Unknown	87	Unknown
PEİ 北	As per title	4 years	88	?	Step-brother of You-liu
YÜ-CH'Ü-CH'ÜAN 於除鞬	As per title	3 years	91	93	Brother of Pei
FENG-HOU 逢侯	As per title	25 years	94	118	Son of Tun-tu-ho

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Written by Ssu-ma Kuang 司馬光 (1019-1086). (Chung-hua Shu-chü 中華書局, Pekin 北京 2005).
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It was written by a historian named Li Yen-shou 李延壽 between 643-659. The Chung-hua Publishers 中華書局 2003 Beijing edition of the work was used in this study.

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The European Hun State



Source: Atilla Karataş Collection



THE EUROPEAN HUN STATE

(374-469)

Ali AHMETBEYOĞLU*

The East European territories are one of the geographical regions that some of the Turkish tribes migrated to from Turkestan (Central Asia)[1] and formed states. These migrations, which originated near the Altai region, were realised along a geographical route connecting the Ural mountainous region and the Ural River, which formed the natural boundary between Europe and Asia, through to the Altai Mountains. Even several centuries earlier in the BC era, many tribes had migrated through the "Gateway of Nations" from Turkestan to the north of the Black Sea region. In this regard, if we do not take into account the migrations of the Scythians centuries before Christ, the Huns were the first Turkish tribe to open the door of the West through choosing East Europe as a homeland.

The Origins of the European Huns

The Huns rode horses at speed and were skilled in archery and swordsmanship and first came to attention when they were spotted to the north of the Black

[1] Turkestan, i.e. Central Asia, is the name of the region covering the south of Mongolia and Siberia, today's Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, a large part of the territory of Kyrgyzstan, the north of Afghanistan, Iranian Khorasan, which is connected to both Merv and Herat, Tibet, East Turkestan and Kansu.

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Sea in the 4th century. The Huns were likened to "the whirlwind blowing from the high mountains," and from this time onwards the Huns began to appear in Greek, Latin and Armenian sources. At times the Huns were identified and referred to as Scythians and King Scythians, and sometimes as Massageteans or Cimmerians.

If the naming conventions and mythological narrative of historians during the Antiquity period are put aside, the origins of the Huns and their relationship to the Asian Huns known by the Chinese as *Hiung-nu* have been the subject of a serious divergence of opinion since the mid-18th century. This issue was first debated in the work of J. de Guignes. According to De Guignes, the Huns, who conquered the South Russian steppes from end to end in the last quarter of the 4th century, were the same as the warlike Asian Huns with whom the Chinese had to struggle against relentlessly for centuries. Modern historians have put forward the following arguments regarding the origin of the Huns:

1. The Huns are of Mongolian origin.
2. The Huns are of Mongolian and Turkish origin.
3. The Huns are of Mongolian and Manchu origin.
4. The Huns are a tribe of Finno-Ugric origin.
5. The Huns are of Slavic origin.
6. The Huns are of Germanic ancestry.
7. The Huns are of Finno-Turkish origin.
8. The Huns are one of the Caucasian and/or Central Asian origin tribes.
9. The Huns are a tribe of unknown origin like the Sumerians who existed in a particular period of history and then became obsolete.

Despite all the claims put forward, research based on historical, archaeological, ethnographic, geographical, and linguistic records has determined that the Huns are the descendants of the Hiung-nu, also known as the Asian Huns. The comparison of the capture of the Alan territories in both Roman and Chinese sources by the German scholar Friedrich Hirth witnessed a turning point in the debate surrounding the origins of the Huns. Those who defeated the Alans between 355-365 AD are referred to as the *Hiung-nu* in Chinese annuals and are recorded as the *Huns* in the Western source Marcellinus. According to the above it is logical to conclude that the Huns and the Hiung-nu otherwise known as the Asian Huns are the same people. This is because it is not conceivable that the Alans' country could be conquered by two different nations at the same time. The emphasis



on the similarity with the Hun-Hiung-nu (Asian Huns), also appears in the works of the Latin and Greek regions. The evidence that supports this view stems from the fact that the archaeological findings related to the Huns can be traced as far as the Great Wall of China and show similarities to the Asian Huns, as well as the Turkish origin of known Hun names (such as Balamir, Karaton, and Uldız), especially those of Attila's sons, demonstrates that the European Huns were a continuation of the Asian Huns.[2]

The Migration of the Huns to the North of the Black Sea

The migration of the European Huns to the west is related to the events that transpired in Turkestan following the fall of the Asian Hun state. Indeed, many of the Hun tribes that had lost their supremacy in Turkestan began to appear in Eastern Europe in the early part of the second half of the 4th century, by following the "Northern Migration Route"[3] and passing through the gateway known as the "Gate of Nations" located north of the Caspian Sea.

For almost 200 years a lack of sufficient information persisted regarding the Huns, and it was in the second half of the 4th century that Chinese and Roman sources began to mention the Huns again. Between 355- 365 AD the Huns defeated the Alans thus putting an end to their monarchy. Even though historical sources provide information regarding the capture of the Alan country, undoubtedly the conquest was clearly not the result of one battle or war. The Huns and the Alans had previously encountered each other on several occasions, and the Alans were only definitively defeated following many years of destructive struggles. After the conquest of Alania and the end of the Alan monarchy, the majority of the Alan tribes came under the control of the Huns. In years to come, these tribes voluntarily served under the command of the Huns in battle. Some of the Alanic groups who chose not to enter Hun rule, fled westward and took refuge in the Caucasus Mountains, in Ossetia, where their descendants live on today.[4]

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2 Ali Ahmetbeyoğlu, *Avrupa Hunları*, Yeditepe Publishers, Istanbul 2017, p. 27-32.

3 This route descends across the vast plains known as the Khazar and Kipchak steppes to the mouth of the Danube River. Following the valley carved by this river, it passes through the "Iron Gate" and extends as far as the expansive Hungarian Plain.

4 Steven Runciman, "Orta Çağların Başlarında Avrupa ve Türkler", *Belleten*, 7, (1943), p. 46; Czégledy Károly, *Nomád Népek Vándorlása Napkelettöl Napnyugatig,* Akadémia Kiadó, Budapest 1969, p. 43 etc.

Balamir, the First Wars, and the Migration of Peoples

Under the command and authority of Balamir, the Huns continued their migration west until they passed the Volga river. It was at this point that the Huns attacked the Alans living in the region between the Volga, the Don, and the Caucasus. The Huns defeated and assumed control of the Alans who were well known for their skills in archery and swordmanship in the region. Some of the Alan groups that fled from the Huns first joined the Goths in the Balkans and in later years the Vandals. Continuing their advance, the Huns crossed the Don River, defeated the Ostrogoths (Eastern Goths), and assumed control of during the period 374-375. Some of the Hun divisions also undertook incursions against the Suevi-Quadi and Gepids in the Pannonia and Carpathian region. The defeat of the Ostrogoths brought the Huns face-to-face with the Western Goths who had fled from what is today Romania under Athanaric rule. Athanaric retreated to the steep banks of the Dniester River and formed a defensive line against the Huns. Athanaric safeguarded his army both on water and on land with his thirty thousand soldiers in position. However, subsequent to the unanticipated Hun attack, the Visigoths endured a heavy defeat, dispersed, and many fled south. Athanaric, together with the groups loyal to him, dropped back to the region between the Olt and Danube rivers, and from that point crossed the Carpathians to seek refuge in the Hungarian Plain (in 376). Following this defeat, many of the Goths fled into Eastern Roman territory.[5]

From approximately 375- 400, the Huns did not embark on any military campaigns against the European lands of the Eastern Roman Empire. However, throughout this period, they closely monitored the events unfolding within the empire. As the historian Jerome (Hieronymus) wrote that the Huns' first attack came when they became aware that both the Roman Empires (Eastern and Western) were at war with each other. The Eastern Roman Emperor Theodosius I (379–395) subsequently pulled back his army from the eastern regions, and even had the Visigoths from the southern banks of the Danube who were charged with defending the border, accompany him. At the head of his army, the emperor progressed towards the Alps to face Eugenius, who had previously opposed his rule in 394. Consequently, the eastern and Danubian frontiers were in a vulnerable

[5] Jordanes, *Romana et Getica*, prep. Theodor Mommsen, Berolini 1882, p.90-91; Bernard S.Bachrach, *A History of the Alans in the West*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis 1973, p.26-27.



position which the Huns used to their advantage seizing the opportunity in 395 to strike against the Romans.[6]

Under Karaton rule, the Huns employing their established strategic approach, launched attacks on the Roman Empire from two specific directions. Some Hun groups, commanded by the western division set their eyes on the Danube, first crossing the frozen river and subsequently seizing the plains of Moesia. From that point, the Huns caused widespread devastation through carrying out attacks extending as far as the Alps, advancing through the Balkans, Illyria, and Thrace. This campaign by the Huns instilled fear in the Goths, more than the Romans, who had not forgotten the terror they had endured two decades earlier at the hands of the Huns. Concurrently, a group of Huns under the command of the eastern division led by two beys, Basik and Kursik based around the Don River besieged Asia Minor (Anatolia) and Syria through the Caucasus. These attacks were carried out in a deliberate and disciplined fashion and seem to have been led by the desire to identify territories that could be used a new homeland. These events alarmed not only the Eastern Roman Empire but also the Sasanian Empire, causing significant concern in all quarters. The period between 375-400 CE was characterised by the Huns being mostly inactive in Europe. However, a small group of Huns were spotted in the territories of Pannonia, after crossing into the lands south of the Danube. During the above period, the number of Huns present along the Eastern Roman frontier was quite limited, with their presence mostly confined to Eastern Hungary and Transylvania. Most of the Huns, however, remained in their central base near the Don River in southern Russia.[7]

After a period of inactivity for twenty-five years, the Huns who dominated the plains of Southern Russia after uprooting several tribes from that area, started campaigns again following the increase in their manpower and military strength. The Visgoth King Alaric I had accompanied Emperor Theodosius I (r. 379–395) during his Italian campaign but quickly pulled back his soldiers to Moesia along the Danube upon hearing that a Hun attack was imminent. Before the onset of winter, they relocated their families there and retreated into the Balkans and deeper into imperial territories. Also, during this time, the platoon led by Gainas the leader of the Gothic mercenaries was established in 399 was looting and destroying the outskirts

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6 Edward Gibbon, *Roma İmparatorluğu"nun Gerileyiş ve Çöküş Tarihi,* 2, trans. Asım Baltacıgil, Bilim, Felsefe, Sanat Publicationsı, Istanbul 1987, p.41; Herwig Wolfram, *History of The Goths,* University of California Press, California 1987, p.270 etc.

7 For the Turkish translation of Priskos' work, see A. Ahmetbeyoğlu, *Attila'nın Sarayı'nda Bir Romalı*, Yeditepe Publishers, Istanbul 2013, p.47.

of Constantinople. These mercenaries also took part in fierce battles against Roman troops, as well as fighting each other, in clashes that occurred on both sides of the Bosporus. Among these mercenary groups was also the platoon of Tribigild, who declared himself king of the Ostrogoths.

The Eastern Roman Empire's defence was essentially powerless against these severe barbarian attacks. In the summer of 400 CE, Gainas successfully gained control of Constantinople and unleashed a reign of terror. He plundered, looted and set fire to the imperial palace. As a hardened zealous adherent of Arianism, Gainas attempted to overtake a Christian church for his own followers. However, his actions were to spark consequences that eventually would lead to his demise. The angry people of the capital confronted his mercenaries, destroying half of his army. The troops left standing were seized by fear and fled the city, and Gainas and his men were banished from the empire. They retreated through Thrace to the northern banks of the Danube, back to their own homeland. It was in his own country that Gainas met a bitter end. During a particularly cold December, the Huns caught his army off guard and caused mayhem by launched a devastating attack. During this battle, Uldin the commander of the Huns' western division, sent Gainas's severed head to Constantinople as a New Year's gift (3 January 401). This was a welcome gift for the emperor, who had no greater desire to learn of the death of the bandit who had tormented his empire for two years. As a sign of appreciation, the Emperor Arcadius (r. 395–408) sent offerings to reciprocate, thus forging an alliance with the foe of his foe. To commemorate the victory, he commissioned the construction of the magnificent Column of Arcadius, second in grandeur only to the Trajan's Column. In reality, despite the glorious celebrations by the Romans, the victory did not actually belong to the Romans.[8]

Uldin, the commander of the Huns' western division, embarked on an attack against the Eastern Roman Empire in 408 upon receiving news that the Roman Emperor Arcadius had passed away on 1st May 408. The late emperor's seven-year-old son, Theodosius II (r. 408–450) ascended to the throne. Uldin focused his attention on the territory stretching from the mouth of the Olt River to the Iron Gates and set alight several naval outposts that resembled towers along the northern banks of the Danube.[9] Uldin's subsidiary detachment of the Sciri (an East Ger-

[8] Ali Ahmetbeyoğlu, *Avrupa Hunları*, p.70-76.

[9] Proceeding from east to west, the settlements of Sucidava/Celei, Desa, Hinova, Drobeta/Turnu Severin, Dierna/Orșova, and Gornea were all reduced to ashes.



manic tribe who had been allies of the Huns from 381 onwards) progressed through List and took the strategically critical fortress of Castra Martis (modern-day Kula) in Moesia. The Eastern Roman commander wished to end the conflict and barter peace with Uldin. In response to this, Uldin demanded an annual tribute of gold as a prerequisite for agreeing to end the conflict and ensuring the evacuation of the fortress. Following this important triumph, Uldin allegedly pointed to the rising sun and stated, "From where the sun rises to where it sets, I will conquer all lands." The Romans, however, did not accept this demand. They recaptured Castra Martis, dealt a severe blow to the Sciri army, and managed to push Uldin back to the northern banks of the Danube (409). Subsequently, they fortified their positions on the southern banks of the Danube, and by the spring of 412, with the preparation of a new Danube fleet and through the repair of older vessels, they secured the defence of the river frontier. This was the first major coordinated Hun assault, and it was critical for both the Eastern Roman Empire and history worldwide. The Emperor Theodosius II (ruled 408—450), who was a minor came to the throne during the conflict and to protect the capital, he immediately ordered the construction of a new city wall. This fortification (known as the "Theodosian"/" Anthemian" Walls) was finished in 413, and safeguarded Eastern Rome for more than a millennium.[10]

In 422, the Hun army under the leadership of King Rugila launched an attack, benefitting from the internal unrest in the Eastern Roman Empire. Progressing at a rapid pace, the Huns invaded Macedonia and Thrace. The fact that many of the Roman soldiers based in Thrace were re-stationed to the eastern front in 421 expedited the advance of the Huns. As a consequence of the Huns' invasion into Thrace, the Roman army started to retreat and redeploy to counter the imminent threat. The Romans had previous to this invasion felt the stifling pressure from the Huns, and this military campaign forced the Eastern Roman Empire to agree to a treaty that compelled them to pay an annual tribute of 350 pounds of gold (with one Roman pound equalling approximately 453.6 grams).[11]

The last years of Rugila's reign were characterised by a period of relative tranquillity that spanned nearly a decade in Hunnic–Eastern Roman diplomacy,

[10] Sozomenus, *Ecclesiastica Historia, II,* Oxford 1860, p.891-894; István Bóna, *Das Hunnenreich,* Konrad Theiss Varlag, Stuttgart 1991, *p.*22 etc.

[11] I. Bóna, *Das Hunnenreich*, p.23-24; Béla Szász, *A Húnok Története Attila Nagykiraly*, Bartha Miklós Társaság Kiadása, Budapest 1943, p.129-130.

before relations began to deteriorate. In keeping with traditional diplomatic practice, the Eastern Romans sought to undercut the authority of the Huns by forming secret alliances. The Romans purposely provoked some of the tribes that lived along the Danube—among them the Amilzuri, Itimari, Tonosuri, and Boisci—to rebel against the Huns.

As a consequence of the above, Rugila deployed his experienced envoy Esla, who was well versed in diplomatic negotiations with the Romans, to Constantinople to issue a stern ultimatum. The Eastern Romans were to cease undermining the Huns, and to repatriate the Hunnic defectors who had sought refuge in the Roman Empire or were to face the harsh reality of war. As a result, Rugila began gathering his forces and made headway towards the Thracian and Danubian frontiers. Owing to the action taken by the Huns, the Eastern Roman monarchy dispatched to Plinthas and Dionysius who were both experienced consuls from Thrace and Scythia respectively. Plinthas and Dionysius held military rank as envoys to the Huns. Meanwhile, Plinthas sent Esla, who was on his way back to his homeland from Constantinople, accompanied by Singiluchus, to Rugila with the aim of discouraging him from starting a conflict. Epigenes, who held the purse strings to the treasury, was also in the delegation with the envoys. In 434, Rugila was ready to pursue peace negotiations with the Romans, but he unfortunately passed away and the Hun leadership passed to Attila and Bleda.[12]

Attila

The exact date and place of birth of Atilla, the leader of the European Huns, and details relating to his formative years and upbringing are not certain. Generally speaking, it is assumed that he spent his childhood with his father, Muncuk, and upon the death of his father his guardianship passed to his uncle Rugila. Attila's father's name transcribed as Mundiuchus by Priscus and Mundzuco by Jordanes, can be said to be of Turkic origin. The name has a few meanings ranging from "pearl," "bead," "flag," or "standard." However, no definitive information has survived to today about Muncuk's life. A black hole exists with regard to whether he held office in the administrative ranks, or whether he ever came to the throne. It is assumed that Muncuk lost his life at a young age given that Attila and Bleda's

[12] A. Ahmetbeyoğlu, *Avrupa Hunları*, p.80-87; Timo Stickler, *Hunlar*, trans. Ergin Ayan, Runik Kitap, Istanbul 2022, p.60-67.



guardianship passed to Rugila. The assertion made in literary works that Atilla was born in the period when the Huns had settled along the banks of the Itil (Volga) River (circa 390–395) and that he spent some of his youth as a hostage at the Roman court, therefore having access to intricate details of Roman affairs, has not been substantiated by contemporary sources and remains unproven. The meaning and semantic roots of "Attila's" name have long been subject to a divergence of scholarly opinion. Some scholars argue that the name is of Gothic origin, putting forward meanings like "little father," "beloved," or "older brother." These scholars support the view that the name is a Germanic rendering of a Turkic word from the Hun period. While other scholars support the view that the name might be of Hungarian, Slavic, or Tocharian origin. A more commonly accepted theory is that the name comes from Itil-Etil, another name for the Volga River. The name has also been associated with the Old Turkic word Attay, which has the meaning of "renowned emperor." In addition, another view in circula suggests that the name originated from Ata-la, which stems from the meaning "my father" or "dear father." Also, Gy. Németh has put forward an original proposition that "Attila" might have been the name he adopted in his later years, and that he used a different name in his youth. This hypothesis is in keeping with the naming conventions of early Turkic cultures. It is also a possibility that "Attila" was used not only as a personal name but also an honorific title given to the ruler of the Huns. In the way of an example, O. Pritsak, has asserted that the name is of Turkic origin, constructed as Es-til-ä ~ As-til-ä ~ At-til-a = Attila, meaning "great ocean" or "sovereign ruler of all things"—a meaning comparable in greatness to the imperial title "Khagan."[13]

Even though in Turkic state administrative tradition, the succession to the throne did not always pass to the eldest brother, it was however the custom for the most skilled among the princes to reign. In spite of this custom, Bleda became ruler of the Huns. However, his reign was mainly superficial in nature. Since he was more skilled than his brother, Attila maintained control over all administrative, military, and economic affairs. This is in effect meant that Atilla ruled the state. Indeed, the negotiations for peace with the Eastern Roman Empire, that had begun during Rugila's reign, were finalised by Attila after his uncle's death. Attila immediately set out for Illyria and in the city of Margus (present-day Orašje-Dobruja), which was situated opposite the fortified walls of Constantia at the juncture of both the Morava and Danube Rivers. Atilla stipulated his terms of peace while mounted

[13] Ali Ahmetbeyoğlu, *Avrupa Hunları*, p.92.

on horseback, in front of the crowds. These conditions were deemed agreeable by the Eastern Roman delegation, led by the envoy Plinthas, in 434 CE. The agreement, known in history as the Treaty of Margus, included the following conditions:

1. Those who had been captured by the Romans, including those who had previously fled to Rome, and those escaping from the Huns, shall not be allowed into the Roman Empire.
2. Roman refugees and captives will be released upon payment of a ransom of eight gold coins. The captives can only be released in the event that the ransom has been paid.
3. The Romans shall not enter into partnerships with tribes under Hun rule.
4. Trade shall be carried out in accordance with equal conditions for the Huns and the Romans.
5. Both parties shall pledge to maintain reciprocal security and peace.
6. The agreement shall remain in effect, and all parties will abide by its terms.
7. The current annual tribute of 350 Roman pounds of gold payable to the Hun sovereign shall be increased to 700 pounds of gold.[14]

The treaty was fortified by an ancestral oath and a religious ceremony, the exact content of which is unknown. Subsequently, the Eastern Roman authorities expelled the Huns who had sought refuge in their empire. Mama and Atakam from the Hunnic royal lineage were among those extradited and were executed publicly by Atilla at the Citadel of Carsus in Thrace. Following the finalisation of the treaty, Roman sources are quiet for a long period in relation to the movements of the Huns. Presumably, it was during this time that Attila strengthened his hold over different tribes and communities that inhabited Northern and Eastern Europe, thus further extending his realm. Due to the very disjointed character of the historical records, it is very difficult to ascertain the exact breath and grandeur of Attila's rule.

The Margus Peace negotiations, were the precursor to Attila's emergence onto the historical stage. Atilla definitively displayed leadership qualities and charismatic authority. Atilla forwent traditional diplomatic convention such as negotiating on horseback. He not only enforced will, but he also secured a clear psychological advantage for the Huns over their Roman counterparts. This previously unwitnessed show of power had a lasting effect on other tribes throughout the region. The very mention of Attila's name preceded the Hun army, instilling fear and panic in the territories they set their sights on. In addition, the Margus episode demonstrated

[14] *Priskos*, p.24-25; B. Szász, *op.cit.,* s.187-191; I. Bóna, *op.cit.,* p.55-56.



Attila's clear comprehension of both the internal and external workings of the Hunnic state. Atilla was also said to be extremely charismatic. He event went as far as to have those opposing him even if they were Royalty, executed. This was an act to instil fear in subordinate tribes that were likely to succumb to Roman influence This token act, coupled with his pragmatic political strategies, made sure he could establish firm control and consolidate his authority throughout the realm.[15]

The capital of the Huns Empire was what is today the central Danube region. Nevertheless, Huns made up a very small percentage of the population in this area. Germanic peoples still made up a sizable portion of the population including the Ostrogoths who lived in Pannonia west of the Danube and the Gepids who lived east of the river. Even so the Ostrogoths and Gepids were allowed to choose their sovereign while living under Hunnic control. They were still independent in their internal affairs but when it came to foreign policy, they were subject to Hun control. In addition, they had to supply the Hunnic army with soldiers and pay a set tribute. This was also the time when Hunnic pressure on different tribes in what is now Germany was strengthened. Hunnic rule was extended to Germanic communities living on or close to the Rhine River including the Alemanni Burgundians and Ripuarian Franks. The Saxons and Thuringians were forced to submit to Hunnic authority in a similar manner. Hunnic domination consequently reached as far as the Baltic and North Seas.

The Anglo-Saxon and Jute migrations from continental Europe to Britain were also closely associated with the growth of the Hun Empire. Several Turkic tribes established themselves in the Hungarian plain during this time and the Huns took control of the steppes in southern Russia. A group of Hunnic descent living in southern Russia the Sorosgurs were vanquished by Attila in 435. The Agacheri also recognized the supremacy of the Hunnic people. In addition, the Finno-Ugric and Slavic tribes that lived in the wooded areas north of the vast Russian steppes unconditionally accepted Hunnic rule. An additional indication of this increasing dominance is the eastern extension of Hunnic frontiers to the Don Rivers banks. Attila recognized the strategic importance of this area and contemplated launching a campaign against the Persians from here. Specifically, the area of Sogdiana was

[15] Ali Ahmetbeyoğlu, "Hunların Başbuğu, Romalıların Efendisi, Tanrının Kırbacı: Attila", *Türk Tarihinde Liderler*, ed. Okan Yeşilot et.al., Yeditepe Publishers, Istanbul 2019, p.81-108.

an important link between the Chinese Empire and the European Huns. Indeed the Huns sent a number of diplomatic missions to the Chinese court from this region.[16]

Hunnic-Eastern Roman Relations

The Hunnic Empires strategy toward the Eastern Roman Empire did not significantly change under Attilas rule. Originally outlined during Uldins rule the plan stayed the same: take advantage of every chance to apply pressure on the Eastern Roman state in order to eventually subjugate it completely to the Huns. This policy was summed up in Uldins well-known warning to Eastern Roman envoys: From where the sun rises to where it sets I shall conquer all lands. Subduing the Eastern Roman Empire was a crucial step toward Attila's larger objective of achieving universal dominion. As a result, he gave the empires political and military neutralization top priority. Attila was not only a strong military leader and statesman but also a skilled diplomat who tried to take advantage of advantageous situations. He strengthened his hold on power after the Treaty of Margus by subjugating a large number of Slavic Finno-Ugric Germanic and Turkic tribes. After establishing his dominance, he reappeared on the regional scene in the 440s. The Vandals took control of Carthage and most of Roman Africa in 439 including a significant naval force that was based there. To protect Sicily from Vandal invasions the Eastern and Western Roman armies organized in the spring of 440. The Persians seized the long-awaited chance to attack Armenia by taking advantage of this Roman diversion. The Eastern Roman Empire responded by deploying significant military forces to counter the Persian threat.

Aware of these events Attila quickly organized his army and launched an attack on Castra Constantia the easternmost Roman stronghold on the Danube taking many Roman prisoners in the process. Roman representatives were quickly sent to engage in negotiations with the Huns in retaliation. The envoys started diplomatic talks claiming that the attack was against established treaties. Attila however used the Bishop of Marguss desecration of holy Hunnic burial grounds—which occurred after he crossed into Hunnic territory—to defend his actions as a warning rather than a declaration of war. Attila warned that hostilities would escalate unless the bishop and several fugitives—the quantity of whom was emphasized—were turned over in line with the Treaty of Margus. The accusations were refuted

[16] Ali Ahmetbeyoğlu, *Avrupa Hunları*, p.96.



by the Roman delegation but because the Huns were adamant about their demands no compromise could be reached and war broke out. After ravaging the surrounding areas and crossing the Danube in the fall of 440 Hunnic forces took control of the city of Viminacium (present-day Kostolac). Many Eastern Romans contended that the bishop ought to be turned over in the face of these assaults in order to protect the state from being jeopardized by a single person. Fearing extradition, the bishop escaped to the Huns in secret promising to give up Margus in exchange for assurances of his safety. On the condition that he kept his word the Huns promised to comply with his request and offer support. When the bishop returned to the Roman frontier he led a small Hunnic detachment to an ambush point along the Danube. He signaled the Huns to begin their attack at a specially selected time during the night and they were successful in taking the city. This action gave the Huns access to the road leading to Thrace and Constantinople.[17]

First Balkan Campaign

Exploiting the desperate political and economic state of the Eastern Roman Empire, the call for assistance against the Romans by the Vandal King Geiseric, and the empire's growing inability to resist Hunnic power, Attila pressed on with the war that had begun with the capture of Margus, invading the Balkans in 441. Crossing over to the southern bank of the Danube, he renewed his westward campaign, carrying his operations deep into the land of Illyria. He assaulted and captured Singidunum (modern Belgrade) and led an entire population into captivity. Shortly, he captured Sirmium, then annexed the province of Pannonia Secunda, along with Naissus (modern Niš), to the Hunnic empire. The Huns' rapid march towards Thrace was ultimately halted by the activities of Aetius, the renowned Western Roman Empire general and long-time ally of the Huns. As an intermediary, Aetius reassured Attila that the Eastern Roman Empire would meet the conditions of the Treaty of Margus, like paying the unpaid tribute and handing over those who had taken refuge on Roman territory. As a gesture of good faith, Aetius sent his son, Carpilio, as a hostage to the Hunnic court. One result of this treaty was that several strategically important strongholds on the Danube passed into the hands of the Huns, and there was no power in the Balkans remaining strong enough to resist them. The Roman-Eastern Roman Emperor treaty of 442 was ratified on

[17] *Priskos*, p.21-22; Ali Ahmetbeyoğlu, "Attila Devrinde Hun-Doğu Roma Münasebetleri", *Türk Dünyası Araştırmaları*, 71 (1991), p.53-58.

the Roman side by Consul Nomus. The Roman Emperor who reigned in the eastern provinces signed the treaty sometime near the beginning of 443 and began efforts at adherence to it.[18]

The Second Balkan Campaign

With the year 447 looming, it can be ascertained that Attila's stance towards the Eastern Roman Empire became increasingly rigid. From the First Balkan Campaign onwards, Emperor Theodosius II attempted to construct a defensive line against the Huns within the Balkan peninsula and had commissioned Nomus, the Magister Officiorum, to prepare a new limes.[19] However, this was the least of the Emperor's problems, as the financial crisis that had hit Eastern Rome, coupled with the epidemic outbreak of 446, and the earthquake of 447 that wreaked havoc on many cities including Istanbul, gave Atilla the upper hand against the Eastern Roman empire. In addition to the harsh predicament of East Rome's army and economy, the desire to turn his attention to West Rome after he had captured East Rome, motivated Atilla. Atilla was ultimately laying the foundations for realising his dream of global sovereignty. During this period, Atilla forcibly levied taxes against the Romans in lieu of the tributes that the Romans had not paid on time. During this period, Attila penned a letter relating to the arrival of envoys, the return of fugitives, and the payment of tribute. He sent this letter to the Eastern Roman Empire through the ambassadors he dispatched to present his demands. He also requested that Roman envoys accompany his ambassadors upon their return. Attila made it clear that in the event that these demands were not met, that he would proclaim declare war against the Eastern Roman Empire. Emperor Theodosius II upon reading the letter from Atilla, asserted that he would not return the fugitives but would send a diplomatic delegation. When Theodosius II shunned Attila's main demands, Attila crossed the Danube with his army and took several small fortresses and then successfully attacked Ratiaria, a highly populated city and the key bastion of the Danube region. The Hun army, reinforced by the forces of Valamir, King of the Ostrogoths, and Ardaric, King of the Gepids, advanced into present-day Bulgaria, crossing the Vidin River near the town of Oescus (modern Gigen). There, they wreaked a huge defeat on the Eastern Roman forces led by Arnegisclus, a Gothic-born general and Magister Militum of the Moesia region, who had previously

[18] A. Ahmetbeyoğlu, *Avrupa Hunları*, p.105.

[19] Roman boundary detection system.



defected from the Huns to the Romans. Arnegisclus was subsequently killed on the battlefield.[20] After this triumph, Attila sent a division of his army to attack Asemus (modern Osem) Castle which is close to Nikopol, while at the same time, sending other soldiers towards the east to take the areas along the Danube. Atilla lead the primary Hun division towards the south and conquered Sofia and Philippopolis (known as Plovdiv today) and laid siege to Adrianople. Atilla left behind forces to continue the siege of Adrianople and made headway towards Silistra and Preslav before marching toward Constantinople. On his way to Constantinople, Atilla took the cities of Lüleburgaz, Gallipoli, and Akbaş Harbor. However, Attila made the sudden decision to turn around and head back with the aim of destroying any pockets of remaining resistance. Making through his way across the Thrace, Atilla attacked Thessaly and went as far as the region of Thermopylae Pass. The Hun threat now loomed directly over the imperial capital, Constantinople. Confronted with the reality of Atilla's uncompromising triumphs, the Eastern Roman Empire fell into extreme hopelessness. Whilst the hopes of the Romans were dashed by the defeat of the Eastern Roman forces posted in Sicily against the Vandals and along the Persian frontier, and the subsequent defeat of these forces under the command of Prince Aspar by the Huns at Chersonesus in 447. Subsequently, Emperor Theodosius II was forced to beg Atilla for peace to be brokered. Peace was brokered between the Huns by Senator Anatolius, the leader of the Empire's Eastern army who had set up a camp at Athyra (modern Büyükçekmece), and the Eastern Romans. The treaty was signed in 447 and is known historically as the "Peace of Anatolius."

The treaty stipulated the following terms:

1. Those who had sought refuge in the Eastern Roman Empire were to be returned forthwith to the Huns:
2. A fee of 6,000 pounds of gold was to be paid to the Huns in lieu of unpaid tribute.
3. The yearly tribute paid to the Huns would be raised to 2,100 solidi.
4. A fine of 12 solidi would be payable for each Roman prisoner who had sought refuge in the Roman Empire without ransom. If this fee was not paid, the individual would be returned to their original owner.
5. The Romans would no longer open their borders to anyone leaving from the Hun Empire.

[20] *Priskos*, p.26, 29; Theophanes, *Chonogrophia*, bk.*Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae, II,* prep. I. Classen-I. Bekker, Bon 1839, p.102 etc.; B. Szász, *op.cit.,* s.216-217; A. Gibbon, *Roma İmparatorluğu'nun Gerileyiş ve Çöküş Tarihi, III,* p.215-216.

The Eastern Romans were forced to concede to the severe terms of the treaty due to fact that they were so terrified of the Huns. The East Roman treasury was depleted through pursuing fame, luxury, and fruitless endeavours. Thus, the empire was facing a severe economic crisis and was forced to find ways to raise the payments owed to the Huns. Taxes were unjustly and forcibly levied on the people, which included all those who had once been legally exempt from the land tax. Everyone was forced into parting with a share of their gold, and tax officials collected the dues using force. Wealthy citizens were compelled to sell their heirlooms, jewellery, and their cherished possessions to meet these compulsory payments. The consequence of the war was so catastrophic for the Romans that many perished from famine or committed suicide. The treasury struggled to collect the gold they needed to pay the Huns. However, the gold that was collected was paid to the Huns by the envoy Scotta, who had come to Constantinople specifically for this reason. In addition to the payment, the fugitives were also returned to the Huns.

Following the brokering of peace with the Romans, Attila insisted that the Hunnic captives imprisoned by the people of Asemus, a city that flows into the Danube and was established at the mouth of the Osima River. Atilla also demanded a ransom for the Romans who had deserted his realm and were subsequently handed over to the Eastern Roman Empire by the inhabitants of Asemus. Attila was adamant that the peace negotiations would not be sealed unless his demands were met. Even though Asemus was a florishing town, situated not too far away from Illyria and adjacent to a part of Thrace, it was attacked by the Huns due to the fact that the Asemus inhabitants had attacked the Roman contingent that was transporting the tribute and fugitives from Constantinople to the Huns. As a result of this assualt, many Huns died, and both Hunnic and Roman fugitives were subsequently released. To make matters worse, some of the delegation was captured. Thus, Attila demanded that the Romans who were in Asemus were returned, that the stipulated ransom be met, and that the captured Huns were released, otherwise he would march with his huge army.

The Romans dealt with Attila's demands by having the Roman envoy Anatolius and the commander of the Thracian garrison, Theodulus, write to the inhabitants of Asemus, insisting that they either return the Roman fugitives who had sought refuge with to them or pay the ransom of twelve gold coins for each captive, and to release the Hunnic defectors forthwith.



The Eastern Roman Empire's defence infrastructure could not withstand the military campaigns led by Atilla in his reign along the Danube. Ultimately, this ensured that there were no barriers left that would hinder the advance of the Huns. In fact, the Eastern Roman Emperor looked upon Attila's conditions as orders from a sovereign and accepted the heavy tribute demanded by Atilla accordingly. In accordance with the traditional Turkish understanding of statecraft, this acquiescence was enough within its own right to indicate that a state was subjugated. The tribute in the form of gold levied by the Huns during the Balkan campaigns enriched the Hunnic treasury and significantly expanded their frontiers in the region.[21]

The policy adopted by Attila against the Eastern Roman Empire was a direct reflection of his practical and pragmatic leadership style. It is apparent that Attila had a clear comprehension of the world at large, especially with regard to the Western Roman Empire, the Eastern Roman Empire, and the Sasanian Empire. Atilla believed he was bequeathed with divine blessing , and his primary goal was to establish control "from the place where the sun rises to where it sets." In pursuance of this dream, Atilla set his sights on the Eastern Roman Empire first, which was politically and militarily weaker, and chose a policy of staggered military advancement.[22]

In terms of the foreign policy pursued by Attila, he first maintained agreeable diplomatic relations with the Western Roman Empire. However, this did not last long. The two Balkan campaigns that resulted in the subjugation of the Eastern Roman Empire and the attempted foiled assassination plot against him, pushed Attila to change the tone of Hunnic diplomacy. As a consequence, Atilla then set his sights on the Western Roman Empire, followed by the Sasanians. According to legend, the fact that Attila possessed the Sword of Ares, the God of War, was viewed as a sign that he was destined to fulfil these ambitions. In line with the above, the foreign policy of the Huns shifted markedly towards the West.

Relations Between the Huns and Western Roman Empire

According to both contemporary and later sources, the brief but intensely troubled reign of Attila was, for those who lived through it, a tale of conflict that "left

21 A. Ahmetbeyoğlu, "1550. Yıl Dönümünde Anatolius Barışı Hakkında Düşünceler", *Tarih Dergisi*, 36 (2000), p.1-6.

22 Ali Ahmetbeyoğlu, *Hunların Başbuğu, Romalıların Efendisi, Tanrının Kırbacı: Attila*, p.81-108.

Europe orphaned." Attila drafted thousands into war. But in fact, during the first two years of his rule, he did not himself start any military forays against either the Western or Eastern Roman Empire. The Western Roman rulers, however, continued to cherish very great doubts about Attila's peacefulness. Soon after Bleda's death, two envoys—Carpilio and the senator Cassiodorus—were sent to Attila for negotiations regarding matters connected with the Huns. These diplomatic meetings resulted in a pledge from Attila to uphold the peace. Contrary to some accounts that attribute it to Cassiodonus' bold and eloquent oratory, this peace was actually secured by the concessions given by Galla Placidia. As a result of the treaty, Pannonia was handed over to the Huns by the Sava River. The rest of Pannonia had previously come under Hun rule in earlier times. In return, Attila was given the title Magister Militum, a title which in reality meant a fixed regular yearly payment—practically tribute to be paid by the Western Roman Empire. At this time, the line of military defence for the Western Romans was pulled back from Noricum Mediterraneum, Valeria Media, Poetovio and along the Drava River. While talks with the Huns were going on, in 446 Aetius got a long letter from people in Britain asking for help. But since they feared a Hun attack because of Attila's great strength, the Roman government did not answer this plea. Attila pivoted his focus towards the Eastern Roman Empire for a while, and thus the Western Romans enjoyed a reprieve. Ultimately it was not long before they understood that as soon as Attila fulfilled his goals in the East, he would turn his sights towards them.[23]

Attila's perception of the Western Roman Empire began to change and was different from his previous view. Atilla was of the opinion that if the Eastern Roman Empire was defeated, the Western Empire would also face defeat. Indeed, Atilla had knowledge of the schemes and plots against him, coupled with the military defence of Constantinople, Attila attempted to consolidate his position by negotiating a new pact with Eastern Roman leaders. As Atilla made headway for a campaign against the Western Roman Empire, he sought rationalizations to justify his plans. One justification seemed plausible as it stemmed from an event during the siege of Sirmium in 441. At that time, while the Huns surrounded Sirmium, an envoy named Constantius, sent by Aetius, received golden chalices from the city's bishop as ransom for its safety. After Sirmium surrendered, Constantius returned to Rome and exchanged the chalices for gold. Upon learning of this, Attila and Bleda executed Constantius and demanded the handover of Silvanus, whom they accused of wrongdoing. Anticipating that the Western Roman authorities would

[23] *Priskos*, p.47; p.74 etc.; B. Szász, *A Húnok Története, Attila Nagykiraly*, p.263 etc.; Arnold H.M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire 284-602,* Blackwell, Oxford 1973, p.176-189.



likely refuse to surrender Silvanus and instead offer compensation, Attila used this demand as a diplomatic justification for his military actions.[24]

While preparing for his campaign against Western Rome, Attila was still actively pursuing diplomatic channels. Honoria, the sibling of the Western Roman Emperor Valentinian III, was forced by her brother to stay single and to not marry in order to obstruct her from claiming a stake in the monarchy. However, as a result of a scandal that erupted at court in 449, she was sent to Constantinople, where she was under close surveillance within the palace. Disgraced and desperate, Honoria secretly appealed to Attila for assistance in early 450, even going as far as to send him a golden engagement ring. Attila subsequently accepted the marriage proposal and demanded half of the empire as a dowry, specifically the Gallic territories that was Honoria's entitlement in the event that she married. Fearing that his cousin, Eastern Roman Emperor Theodosius II, might support Attila's claims, Valentinian recalled Honoria to Rome in the spring of 450. To neutralize the threat, the emperor arranged a nominal marriage for his sister, thereafter informing Attila that Honoria was now married to another, that governance was not tied to Honoria's person, and that under Roman law, only men could exercise imperial authority. In response, Attila issued war threats and began acting as though he were effectively co-sovereign over the Western Roman Empire. By putting his army into motion. Atilla sought to cloud his true intentions by asserting that his motive was to simply suppress the rebellious Germanic tribes north of Hun territory. Simultaneously, he sent messages to the Western Roman authorities, portraying himself as a friend of the Romans who stood ready to assist them should they require military aid. Additionally, Attila cited the recent collapse of the Frankish kingdom—following his defeat of the Franks and the subsequent death of their king—as further justification for his intervention, claiming that the king's eldest son had sought his assistance. In reality, Attila's primary goal was to forge an alliance with the Germanic tribes and the Visigoths. Meanwhile, in the Eastern Roman Empire, Emperor Theodosius II suffered a fatal accident on July 26, 450, falling from his horse while hunting; he died two days later. He was succeeded by Marcian (r. 450–457), who consolidated his authority by marrying Theodosius's sister, Pulcheria, a figure deeply committed to the Church. Through diplomatic pressure, Attila succeeded in imposing his demands on the new, politically vulnerable Eastern Roman emperor, thereby securing his eastern flank. Moreover, Attila's prompt move to invade the wealthy and fertile lands of Gaul may have been influenced, at least in part, by

[24] *Priskos*, p.39-40.

the urgings of Eudoxius, the leader of the Bagaudae (peasant) uprising, who had sought refuge in Hun territory after the failed rebellion against the empire in 448.[25]

The Battle of the Campus Mauriacus

At the start of 451, Attila was at the head of a colossal army formed of Hun warriors and various allies that entered Gaul. Before embarking on the campaign, he dispatched envoys to the Eastern and Western Roman emperors with an inciting message: "Attila, who is master over both you and me, commands you without delay to build a palace and there to receive him." This early display of scare tactics gave Attila a considerable psychological advantage, instilling fear even before a single blow was struck. As Jordanes observed, "This cunning man was a master of lies and deceit, skilfully wielding them before ever resorting to arms." Despite the fact that the Huns formed the core of Attila's army, a good proportion of his forces consisted of Germanic contingents. Also, there were sizable numbers of Gepids under King Ardaric, Ostrogoths under Valamir, as well as Rugi, Sciri, Quadi, Alamanni, Heruli, Thuringians, Burgundians, and Franks, who collectively made up the remainder of the Hun coalition. Attila led his army in two main divisions. One division was charged with taking the Roman fortresses along the right bank of the Danube, while the other advanced along the left bank, subjugating the tribes along its route. Fundamentally, these two contingents regrouped along the banks of the Rhine, preparing for the march into Gaul. While making headway, Attila purposely left a portion of the Germanic forces in reserve. He also tasked a small unit of Hun cavalry with assisting the Armenians, who had rebelled against the Persians. However, such a small number of Hun cavalrymen were not successful in penetrating through the fortified Persian border stations in the Caucasus passes. Consequently, they could not hinder the Armenians from suffering a tremendous defeat in the calamitous battle at Avarayr on 26 May 451.[26]

As Attila began his war in Gaul, he sent the left division of his army to Metz, while the right division went through Paris toward Orléans. Attila crossed the Rhine and started to take towns in the northeast part of Gaul. During this fight, he made it known that his goal was not to put Roman things at risk but instead to take back

[25] *Priskos*, p.57-58; Stephen Mitchell, *Geç Roma İmparatorluğu Tarihi M.S.284-641*, trans. T. Kaçar, Türk Tarih Kurumu Publicationsı, Ankara 2016, p.5-6.

[26] *Priskos*, p.69; *Jordanes*, p.110; Luis Hambis, *Attila Les Huns*, Paris 1971, p.81; Norman H. Baynes, "Roma and Armenia in the fourth Century", *English Historial Rewiew*, 25 (1910), p.625-643.



control over the Visigoths who had escaped his rule. In answer to the Hun move, Gallic towns gave in one after another, and forts passed over with little fight. Even Roman troops had to pull back, coming together again on the shores of the Loire River. There was no set military group that could face Attila's force. While some Burgundion and Frankish parts sought to withstand, they were soon overborne by the Hunnish strength. Of all the towns in Gaul, twas Paris and Troyes that did stand against the Huns. It was in short time among the folk that these two places had been saved by God's hand through their patron saints.[27]

As Attila continued his advance, he was not prepared to delay the capture of the strong fortress of Metz. Determined to capture it, Atilla sieged the city. Metz, however, offered intense resistance, and Attila was on the verge of abandoning the siege when news arrived that one section of the fortress walls had collapsed. Seizing the opportunity, he launched a ferocious assault and successfully captured the city on April 7.[28]

Subsequent to the events in Metz, Attila advanced to the outskirts of Reims. Many natives fled to the countryside upon hearing of the approaching forces, while Bishop Nicasius and a small group remained. The Hunnic army took control of Reims without resistance. Attila then began to tackle the issue of Orléans, which was protected by a stone bridge over the Loire River and fortified with towers. This bridge was essential for overseeing movement in and out of Visigothic territory. Despite a strong population, Orléans faced many challenges. Consequently, Sangibanus, the leader of the city, decided to surrender and align with the Huns. At this juncture, Aetius landed in Gaul with a Roman army comprising of a range of regional groups. His main aspiration was to win the support from King Theodoric I of the Visigoths. Upon comprehending the gravity of the situation, Theodoric decided to help Aetius, leaving his four sons in Toulouse and travelled with his eldest son, Thorismund, to join forces. Meanwhile, after learning of Sangibanus's decision, Aetius sent reinforcements to defend the city. Although Attila aimed to capture Orléans, he faced strong resistance. The determined defence from the city's inhabitants allowed Aetius and Theodoric to arrive with their troops to assist.[29]

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27 Peter Váczy, *Hunlar Avrupa'da Attila ve Hunları,* DTCF Publications, Ankara 1982, p.112 etc. Christopher Kelly, *Attila Hunlar ve Roma İmparatorluğu'nun Çöküşü*, trans. T. Kaçar, Turkuvaz Kitap, Istanbul 2011, p.216 etc.

28 Grégoire de Tours, *Monumenta Germania Historica Scriptores Rerum Merovingicarum*, I, prep. W. Arndt, 1885, p.67-72.

29 *Jordanes*, p.108-110; *Eustathius Epiphaniensis*, *Fragmenta Historicorum Graecorum*, IV, Instituti Imperialis Francle Typographo, Paris 1851, p.140; Sidonius, Appolinaris, *Epistulae et*

The Visigothic King Theodoric I confronted most of the Gallic forces—the Alans and Burgundians, Franks, Sarmatians, and Saxons—who were now siding against him with Attila. In order to find an appropriate battle, ground and to lure his enemy into a false sense of security, Atilla began to withdraw. Atilla made a speech to rally the morale of his forces and according to Jordanes he said the following:

> Seeing that his army had begun to waver, Attila sought to rally them with the following words: "After having secured victory over so many nations, I find it unnecessary to incite you to action now, just as you stand on the brink of conquering the world. Such exhortations are only needed by inexperienced commanders facing unseasoned troops. Do you not know of anything but war? Is there anything more glorious for a man than to take up arms and exact his revenge? Nature has endowed the human heart with the gift of the thirst for vengeance — one of its greatest blessings. Therefore, in every case, we must charge the enemy, for the side that strikes first is always the more courageous.
>
> Do not be concerned by the coalition of these assorted tribes; after all, uniting for defense is itself a sign of fear. Can you not see? They are already gripped by fear even before the battle begins. They seek the high ground, but it will not save them. Soon they will look for refuge on the plains — and that too will fail them. We know well how inept the Romans are in handling their weapons. I cannot even call this their first sign of failure, but even the dust rising from the earth weighs against them. Clumsily gathered, they attempt to defend themselves with their shields. Pay no heed to these efforts. Strike directly at the Alans and Visigoths; this is where the fiercest part of the battle will be fought.
>
> When the sinews are cut, the limbs collapse, the bones fall away, and the body can no longer support itself. Let your hearts be stirred; as is your custom, charge with passion! Show the power of your weapons, display the might of the Huns! Death comes even to the man who dies peacefully in his bed. Had there been no war, could the Huns have held sway over so many peoples? Why do you think the secret, hidden paths of Maeotis were opened to our ancestors for centuries? I am confident of success. This battlefield will favor the Huns and promises us fortune. I will shoot the first arrow at the enemy, for the man struck by Attila's arrow is already a dead man — for it is Attila who makes war!"[30]

Carmina, see *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*, prep. Leutjohann, VII, Berlin 1887, p.327-330; Cassiodorus, *Variae*, see *Monumenta Germaniae Historica,* prep. Theodor Mommsen, XII, Berlin 1894, p.157; A. Gibbon, *op.cit.,* II, p.235 etc.

[30] *Jordanes*, p.110-112.



During this crucial time, Attila sought out a local soothsayer, recommended by his soldiers, to find out who would emerge victorious in the upcoming battle. Additionally, a sheep was sacrificed, and its shoulder blade was burned in the fire; through the shapes and markings formed on the bone by the flames, the soothsayer attempted to foretell the outcome of the conflict. According to the prophecy, the enemy's commander would perish — yet the Huns themselves would also suffer defeat.[31]

As per the records that have survived to today, primarily from Gallic accounts — the two armies met out in the open close to the place called Maurica or Mauriacum, which is five miles away from the ancient city of Trecas (Tricassis, Tricassira; Troyes today) on the Campus Mauriacus or Mauriacum Campanum. According to non-Gaulian writers and Jordanes, no battle occurred on the plain called Campania to the left bank of Seine River.[32]

The precise date of the battle remains unclear. Attila's attack on Aurelianum (Orléans) ended on 14th June. The arrangments for the retreat, which covered an area stretching approximately 180–200 kilometres, took at least two weeks. Based on the sources that have survived, it can be assumed that the battle occurred at the end of June.[33] The area around the crown at mile 5 in front of Tricassis was presumably the site of a fierce battle along the Aureliani-Tricassis main line, utilising the crossing of the Seine. The fighting on the plain was focussed to the north, north-west.[34] Close to the small ancient town of Brolium, situated around 18 kilometers northwest of Tricassis (modern-day Troyes) on the left bank of the Seine River, Germanic warriors sided with Attila to kill Maximianus and his companions. This is assumed to have happened either just before or shortly following the

[31] Chronican Paschale, *Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae*, prep. Ludwig Dindorf, Bon 1832, p.583; Hüseyin Namık Orkun, *Attila ve Oğulları*, Remzi Kitaphanesi, Istanbul 1933, p.71.

[32] *Jordanes,* p.113-114; Alföldi András, "Les Champs Catalauniques"*, Revue des Etudes Hongroises*, VI (1928), p.108-111; I. Bóna, *Das Hunnenreich,* p.94.

[33] The formation of the two armies in the battle was as follows: The Huns formed the centre of the army commanded by Attila. On the left flank were the Ostrogoths under the three brothers Valamir, Theodemir and Videmir; on the right were the Gepids and other tribes under Ardarik. On the opposite side, Aetius led the Roman forces with the Visigoths on the left, the Ostrogoths on the right, and the Burgundians, Franks, Alans and other auxiliary forces in the centre. *Jordanes*, s.113; B. Szász, *A Hunok Története Attila Nagykirály*, p.291-296.

[34] I. Bóna, *Das Hunnenreich,* p.96-97; Simon Macdowall, *Catalaunian fields ad 451: Rome's Last Great Battle*, Oxford 2015, p.9-10.

battle, as the warriors tried to approach the king at the command of Saint Lupus, Archbishop of Tricassis. This event indicates that the Hunnic right flank was also defending another critical crossing point of the Seine near Brolium. The other case scenario is that they retreated from that point towards Pouan-sur-Aube after the battle. From the early medieval period onwards, Brolium bore the name of an individual who died during the Hunnic era (Saint Mesmin). The number of Hun soldiers, generally estimated at between 30,000 and 50,000 (a remarkably large figure for that period), was significantly exaggerated or distorted by both ancient and modern historians.[35]

The horrid battle, which continued from three in the afternoon until nightfall, came to an end without a clear victor. As darkness drew, Attila retreated to his camp, where he built a defensive barricade from wooden carts and saddles. Due to the Huns' ferocious shower of arrows, the Visigothic-Roman army was unable to launch an assault on the Hunnic camp, and, with the onset of night, they too retreated to their own encampment. Aetius spent the night under the protection of his soldiers' raised shields.[36]

The Visigothic army took with them the body of their king, Theodoric I, who died following a fall from his horse and an injury from a spear thrust from Andagis, a warrior of Ostrogothic descent. The army quickly returned to their country to ensure that Thorismund, the injured heir came to the throne. The other allied contingents dispersed. Aetius, meanwhile, remained at the camp for a time with his own troops, who were of relatively minor importance. Aetius wanted to seek revenge from Attila, who was withdrawing toward the Rhine under the guidance of Lupus, the Archbishop of Tricassis. However, due to the exhaustion and chaotic state of his soldiers, he was not able to extract revenge. Upon returning to his own country, Attila refused to accept the Eastern Roman diplomatic delegation, led by the senior military commander Apollonius, which had been sent to meet him via the Danube. Instead, he demanded that tribute be paid, and threatened them with a new war.[37]

A consensus does not exist regarding the number of soldiers in battle, the exact number of the casualties incurred, and the ultimate outcome of the actual conflict.

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35 A. Ahmetbeyoğlu, *Avrupa Hunları*, p.136.

36 Enrico Andreoli, *Contributo topografico alla battaglia dei catalaunici*, Historia 1927, p.146-152; P. Váczy, *Hunlar Avrupa'da*, p.114-115.

37 Alföldi András, *Magyarország népei és a Római birodalom,* Magyar Szemle Társaság, Budapest 1934, p.53-57; A.H.M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire 284-602,* p.192-201.



Some writers have appeared to have fabricated the size of the Hunnic army advancing against Western Rome, estimating it at up to 500,000 troops. Some accounts argue that the mortalities on both sides could have been as high as between 300,000 and 500,000. While it is known that both sides, together with their respective allies, fielded large armies and suffered significant losses, the figures reported in the sources are undoubtedly exaggerated. Indeed, given the conditions of the time and the patterns of population movement, it is now assumed that Attila's army on the battlefield numbered between 20,000 and 30,000 troops, and that the combined casualties on both sides were, at most, about one-fifth of the 165,000 figure as reported by Jordanes.[38]

A consensus also does not exist in relation to the actual victor of the battle. Broadly speaking and based on Roman sources, ecclesiastical histories, and epic traditions, it is thought that Attila was indeed defeated. However, the reliability and objectivity of Western sources, especially regarding those outside of their own cultural sphere, can be called into question. Thus, the outcome may not have been as portrayed by the sources. The Romans, who perceived their civilization as vastly superior, were reluctant to acknowledge that they might have been defeated by an army whose origins they did not even fully comprehend. Moreover, given the catastrophic consequences of the battle, some have argued that it had no clear victor or vanquished. Yet beyond this, when considering that Attila, despite facing famine and epidemic disease, was able to lead his army safely back to his homeland; that within a year he reappeared powerfully before the gates of Rome, instilling great terror and fear; that even the Emperor and the Roman administration, finding themselves powerless, sought the intervention of the Pope; along with the evident inadequacy of the Roman forces and the onset of the decline of the Western Roman Empire — all of this suggests that the outcome was not as Western historians have traditionally claimed.[39]

The Roman Campaign

Towards the end of spring in 452, Attila departed from Pannonia, going across the Julian Alps, which at that time were not rigorously defended by Aetius. Due to the internal chaos and court plotting, Aetius was not able take the required

38 A. Ahmetbeyoğlu, *Avrupa Hunları*, p.139; Evan Michael Schultheis, *The Battle of the Catalaunian Fields AD 451*, Pen and Sword Military, Philadelphia 2019, p.54 etc.

39 Prosper Tiro, *Epidoma Chronicon, Chronico Minora, I,* see *Monumenta Germania Historica,* prep. Theodor Mommsen, Berlin 1840, p.482 etc.; B. Szász, *op.cit.,* p.296-298.

precautions against Attila's advance. Subsequently, Attila reached the walls of Aquileia with ease, a city that had previously posed a major obstacle to his further advance. This city was of strategic importance as it defended the eastern frontier of the empire and was, therefore, heavily fortified. The soldiers defending Aquileia were Goths under the command of Alaric and Antala. The city was able to resist the Hun's siege for three months, which might have left the impression that surrender was not an option. In the meanwhile, unrest began among the Huns who had captured neighbouring settlements because of a lack of provisions. Nevertheless, Attila deemed it unacceptable to proceed further without capturing such a strategically vital stronghold. It was at that moment that Attila saw a stork leaving Aquileia with its offspring. Atilla used this as a pretext to raise the morale of his troops. Atilla addressed his troops and said as follows:

> This bird, endowed with exceptional instinct, has signalled that the city can no longer protect itself and is thus no longer a safe haven. Therefore, the stork has fled its nest and departed. This is an absolute sign that those defending the fortress are now deprived of the strength and means necessary to continue its defence. Accordingly, that they will no longer be able to withstand our siege for much longer.[40]

This speech had a morale bolstering effect on the Hun soldiers, which resulted in the capture of Aquileia, the ninth biggest city of the empire, after a rigorous three-month long siege. Aquileia had up until that point been insurmountable due to protection provided by wetland, marshes and estuaries. Following the defeat of the city, Attila made headway into Italy, laying to ruin cities such as Altinum, Padua, and Concordia along his way. From that point onwards Atilla advanced through Vicenza, Verona, Brescia, Pergamo, and Milan, even reaching as far as Ticinum (modern-day Pavia). Any city that did not voluntarily open its gates was set ablaze, while many others, faced with this fate, chose to surrender. It is further recounted that upon entering the imperial palace in Milan, Attila observed a fresco depicting the emperor seated on his throne while subordinate kings offered him gifts. Displeased by this image, Attila apparently summoned a painter and commissioned him to create a new depiction, one showing Attila as monarch, with the Eastern and Western Roman Emperors subordinated pouring sacks of coins at his feet as a symbol of the tribute they paid.[41]

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[40] *Jordanes*, p.114.

[41] Ali Ahmetbeyoğlu, "İstenilmeyen ve Vazgeçilemeyen Bir Roma Generali: Flavius Aedius", *Prof. Dr. Özkan İzgi'ye Armağan*, Hacettepe Üniversitesi Publications, Ankara 2011, p.35-48.



In light of this predicament, in order to gain from the experiences of the Eastern Roman Empire, the Western Roman Emperor Valentinian III convened the Roman government to find a resolution. Under the leadership of Avienus, a former consul and one of the most highly respected senators of 450, a diplomatic delegation was dispatched to Attila. This delegation included the Prefect of Rome, Trigetius, and Pope Leo I (later known as Leo the Great). They relied on Trigetius, who had previously succeeded in brokering a treaty with the Vandals' formidable king Geiseric in 435 at Hippo Regius. The delegation met Attila at the juncture of the Po and Mincio rivers, where a truce was requested and secured. Pope Leo, the greatest spiritual figure of Christendom, had donned the magnificent papal vestments reserved for special ceremonies before presenting himself before the great Hun emperor. Even though Attila treated the pope with great courtesy, the exact details of their conversation remain unknown. Whatever transpired between them, the ultimate result was that the Romans pleaded for clemency. The captives they had brought were handed over to the Huns, and in addition, a substantial quantity of gold was presented as a symbol of submission to Attila's authority.

Atilla believed that he had subordinated Western Roman Empire and subsequently retreated from Italy and returned to beyond the Danube. The prolonged siege of Aquileia had cost the army dearly, and in the aftermath, the unburied dead caused outbreaks of disease in the summer heat of northern Italy. For this reason, Attila did not delay his withdrawal. Concerned that his weary forces might encounter the Eastern Roman army on their return, he chose a separate route back via the Adige River.[42] Just as Attila was preparing for a major punitive campaign against the new Eastern Roman Emperor Marcianus, and even contemplating a vast offensive against the Sassanid's, the last major power standing before him, he suddenly died on his wedding night, in the spring of 453, reportedly from severe haemorrhaging from the nose and mouth.

The whereabouts of Attila's grave is unknown. It is assumed that his grave lies somewhere between the Eastern side of the area between the Danube and Tisza rivers. The sources that narrate Atilla's funeral state that his body was consecutively placed into three coffins. The first gold, the second silver and the third coffin was steel. This ceremonious act aimed to depict the power and grandeur that Atilla had achieved. Steel represented the tribes he had defeated, and the gold and silver coffins were symbols of his victories against both Roman Empires respectively. Atilla's burial was carried out in secret at night, and the precious items

[42] Ali Ahmetbeyoğlu, *Avrupa Hunları*, p.145-149.

seized as booty that has adorned his palace such as the gold-embroidered horse harnesses, and other objects symbolizing his kingship were placed in his tomb.

During his lifetime Atilla had conquered vast territories including the Eastern-Western Roman states among others. At the time of his death the true breath and vastness of the empire he left behind is unknown. Jordanes described Atilla's leadership as follows:

> He was a man born to shake nations to their core and to cast fear across the world. His vvery name instilled dread, fed by the grim tales that spread ahead of him. He walked with a great sense of pride, his eyes flashing with a fierce light, his movements radiating the force of his towering self-assurance. Though he loved war above all things, he moved after sober counsel; and much of his achievement was due to the cunning of his brain. To all supplicants, who extended their hands for mercy, he was kind; but he also enriched all that continued faithful to him. Small of stature, broad of shoulder, with eyes too small for his large head, his thin beard showed the grey of age, and his flat nose and rugged features were distinctly the stamp of his lineage. Shrewd and calculating, he usually struck from where the enemy least expected rather than where his threats had pointed.

> Priscus describes Attila's daily life in the following words: He was moderate and reserved in everything. While he gave his banqueting guests cups and plates of gold and silver, he drank out of a wooden goblet and ate off a wooden platter. His dress, and all his shoes, the sword he wore, and the bridle of his horse, obliquely gleamed not more than that of him who commanded them. The other Scythian kings therefore sparkled with gold and precious stones and shone in their glittering attire, but this was not true of Attila.

Attila's reputation has transcended time and remained alive in collective memory across the ages. Atilla commanded attention and respect not only through his strength, authority, and severity but also through his modesty and way of life like that of an ordinary Hun soldier. At official receptions of foreign envoys in the capital—where food and drink were served in golden vessels to reflect the grandeur and power of the state—Attila purposely chose to dine using wooden utensils, like his people. He chose to live in simple dwellings rather than grand palaces that reflected the opulence and ceremony of the era, unlike the Roman emperors. These aspects of Atilla's lifestyle demonstrate that even at the height of his power, Attila was a ruler truly connected to his people and army. Close scrutiny of contemporary sources reveals that Attila as a leader was not a heavy drinker, was not impulsive



and refrained from making rash decisions. Despite the fact that even though his name is most often associated with war, Attila never initiated war in diplomatic relations, and he was careful to proceed on both on both legal and legitimate grounds.

Set apart by his abilities in statecraft and military command, as well as his exceptional qualities, Attila has come to represent far more than a historical figure or a simple hero. Through his education, character, humility, seriousness, determination, and rational policies, he has inspired not only historical accounts but also novels, tales, epics, and legends; he has served as a source of inspiration for poets, painters, and composers. The name of Attila is synonymous with the fall of Rome, a cornerstone of Western civilization, has contributed to ongoing cognitive divergences that persist to this day. Attila established dominion over strategic regions located in the heart of Eurasia, which in our time are subjects of strategic theories, and navigated among the Eastern and Western Roman Empires, the Sasanian Empire, and China. At the same time, he came to symbolize the power that made evident the existence and consciousness of a civilization rooted in a "mobile way of life," from which he emerged—a civilization whose foundations stretch back thousands of years, and which was vastly different in language, religion, and intellectual traditions from the worlds it encountered.

Although short, Attila's reign, described by his contemporaries as almost eternal in nature, was depicted in historical sources as a period of warfare that left Europe "orphaned." Not only armies but even Roman Emperors stood helpless before him; the Pope himself traveled to beg for mercy. As such, Attila came to be seen as the embodiment of fear, helplessness, and submission—as the "Scourge of God" (Flagellum Dei), a divine punishment sent to chastise sinful Christians. In the European imagination, particularly in depictions filled with fantasy and perception, fears and prejudices have played a more prominent role than historical truths, though some realities remain discernible between the lines.[43]

The Demise of the Hun State

Following Attila's death in 452, his eldest son Ellac came to the Hun throne, however his reign was very short-lived. During his short reign, he attempted to maintain the weakening central authority and suppress the attempts of various tribes to break away from the empire. Ellac fought against the rebellious Gepid

[43] Ali Ahmetbeyoğlu, "Attila", *Mete'den Atatürk'e Tarihe Yön Veren Türk Komutanlar*, haz. A. Sefa Özkaya, Kronik Books, Istanbul 2022, p.111-128.

king Ardaric, and in 454, Ellac travelled from the Danube region to southern Pannonia. There, near the Carpathian Basin, he encountered the Gepid army, who allied with Germanic and Sarmatian forces, under Ardaric's command. In the battle, which took place near the Nedao (or Neato) River, probably located in present-day Hungary and of great importance during the dissolution of the Hun Empire. Ultimately, Ellac's army suffered defeat in 454. Leading his troops, Ellac was lethally wounded and died on the battlefield. The Huns withdraw after defeat and incurring heavy casualties. The Gepids seized on the opportunity to take the vacant area, while their allies, the Germanic and Sarmatian tribes, began to settle in the conquered territories and attempted to establish their own dominance. Meanwhile, Attila's middle son Dengizich—who bore a strong resemblance to his father—and his youngest and most beloved son Irnek withdrew to the northern Black Sea regions along with the Huns who had remained loyal but lost their lands.

Under the leadership of Dengizich and Irnek, the Huns occupied Eastern Gothic territory. The Ostrogoths, under King Valamer, protested this incursion to Eastern Roman Emperor Marcian (r. 450–457) and requested new settlement lands. This aligned with Marcian's own political strategy, as he did not recognize Avitus, who had been elevated to the imperial throne in Gaul by the Visigoths. Seeing an opportunity, Marcian aimed to reassert Roman authority over Pannonia, which had been abandoned by the Huns in the autumn of 455. Marcian planned to entrust this strategically weak region—stretching along the Sava River—to trusted allies. Ardaric's strengthened Gepids and the Edica and Sciri tribes had already taken control of the area between the Danube and Tisza rivers and posed a threat to other East Germanic tribes. Thus, by late summer 456, Pannonia had fallen under Ostrogoth control. They settled in the region between the Latin-named Aqua Nigra and the Gothic Scarniunga.

Dengizich and Irnek could not ensure an easy retreat for their followers. In the winter of 456/457, they pursued the Ostrogoths. Valamer's attacks on Attila's sons clearly reflected the shifting power dynamics of the time. Attila's sons attempted to resist King Valamer but ultimately withdrew to a region they called Hunnivar in their own tongue—either along the Dnieper or within the Danube Basin. A second Hun offensive was prompted by the Ostrogoths, who planned to attack the Sadagari, a small tribe related to the Huns and residing in Pannonia. In response, Dengizich mobilized his loyal nobles—Ulzindur, Burtugur, Bittugur, Angiskir, and Bardor (or Bardar)—and went to aid the Sadagari. To prevent the Gothic attack, Dengizich launched an offensive on Valamer's position in Bassiana,



a fortified ancient city still standing at the time. The Goths, however, defeated the Huns in this campaign (459).

From early 460 onward, Dengizich and Irnek attempted to stabilize their position. They tried to maintain a presence in the Pontic steppes and the northern areas below the Danube. In 466, they sent an envoy to Emperor Leo I (r. 457–474), expressing a desire to restore amicable relations and requesting a peace treaty. They asked for the establishment of a designated trade zone along a certain stretch of the Danube where Huns and Romans could freely conduct commerce. However, this embassy was unsuccessful. Emperor Leo, recalling the damage previously inflicted by the Huns, refused to permit such trade. This diplomatic failure caused a rift between the two brothers. While Dengizich favored war in response to the perceived insult, Irnek opposed this course, as ongoing conflict was already affecting the eastern part of their territory. Dengizich could not be dissuaded. In the winter of 466/467, he crossed the frozen Danube and entered Dacia Ripensis (Western Transylvania) with his troops. He disregarded General Anagastes, the Eastern Roman frontier commander and son of the Gothic-origin general Arnegisclus, who had once fought the Huns in the same region (in 447). From this position, Dengizich sent another delegation to Emperor Leo, with a tone of inherited arrogance from his father. He demanded land and an annual tribute for himself and his army, threatening war if these demands were not met. The boldness of the Huns nearly swayed the Emperor. In his reply, Leo stated that he preferred to make friends of former enemies, but he also required absolute submission. The subsequent course of events remains uncertain, though it appears negotiations continued for a time. Ultimately, when Dengizich's initiatives failed, he prepared for war. Despite withstanding Roman pressure for an extended period, he was eventually defeated by General Anthemius (who would become Eastern Roman Emperor in 467). In 469, the new commander of Thrace, Anagastes, decisively confronted Dengizich. The defeated leader was beheaded, and his head was displayed in Constantinople as a warning to others.

After this defeat, Dengizich's remaining forces dispersed or submitted to Roman authority, marking the end of the Hunnic state and the conclusion of their political existence. Following the Huns' defeat by the Goths, the remaining Hun populations near the Dnieper and those led by Irnek withdrawing eastward from Northern Dobruja gradually merged with the Ogur groups along the northwestern Black Sea coast. Together, they laid the foundations of what would later be known in history as the Bulgar state, a Turkic polity. Even centuries after the political

collapse of the Huns in Eastern Europe, sources occasionally referred to the Turkic groups in the region as "Huns."

From the merging point of the Olt River and along the Danube to the Sava River, a great and feared East Germanic kingdom began to take shape. The Sarmatians took control of the land stretching from Sirmium to modern-day Vienna. The Germans also subordinated the Emenciur and Ulcindur tribes, that were closely related to the Huns, and resettled them along the Dacian coast, the plains of the Utus River, and around Almus and Oescus. Some Hun groups, under the leadership of a commander named Kelkal, joined the army of the Eastern Roman commander Aspar, forming its cavalry units.[44]

Conclusion

For almost a hundred years, the European Huns ruled a vast area, which was from the islands of the Atlantic Ocean on one side to Iran—and maybe even the Altai Mountains—on the other. Starting in the second half of the fourth century and continuing on, the Huns came into contact with many different tribes and peoples over the strife of Europe, specifically meeting up with Romans. These meetings were not just about wars; slowly over time, they also became cultural, civilizational, and intellectual links. While kingdoms raised groups of fighters and war made battle, often at the same time efforts were made to form diplomatic ties for knowledge and influence between very different societies. As much as the Huns added to the history, culture, social dynamics, military organization, and intellectual landscape of European societies, they equally—whether through conquest or combat—in many ways assimilated the artistic and architectural elements of other cultures that were exposes to them such as the Goths, Germanic tribes, Alans, and Romans. Having lived with various Turkic tribes in the common cultural environment of Turkestan, the Huns brought different traditions and a new style of art to Eastern Europe. Besides the written historical materials, the archaeological finds of the Hun period, unearthed objects from a great area that is known to stretch as far as Eastern Kazakhstan all the way to the Balkans, have offered important information about the character, causes and ways of this large reciprocal cultural exchange. The Huns moved early—like a 'storm that comes from high mountains'—and first generated fear and surprise among European chroniclers. Thus, the history

[44] Ali Ahmetbeyoğlu, "Attila'nın Oğlu Dengizik'in Devleti İhya Mücadelesi", *Tarih İncelemeleri Dergisi*, XVII/2 (2012), p.301-314.



of the Huns, by these chronicle writers who did not know them and did not understand them, was filled with exaggerations and myths and often unflattering descriptions. The Latin and Greek historians who came into direct contact with the Huns began to change their views, though the fear and pressure which the Huns inflicted on other states did not lessen as their supremacy widened. As the Huns settled more in Eastern Europe and took up a more sedentary way of life, their destinies deeply merged with those many tribesmashed both geologically and politically with them. Many of the modern misconceptions and unfair views about the Huns owe their origin to contemporary written sources—limited as they are, and most of them coming from tribes interacting with the Huns—that reflect other people's perspectives and biases rather than those of the Huns.[45]

[45] Ali Ahmetbeyoğlu, "Tarihi Kaynaklardaki Hun ve Attila Algısı Üzerine Bir Değerlendirme", *Türk Dünyası Araştırmaları,* 238 (2019), p.11-20.

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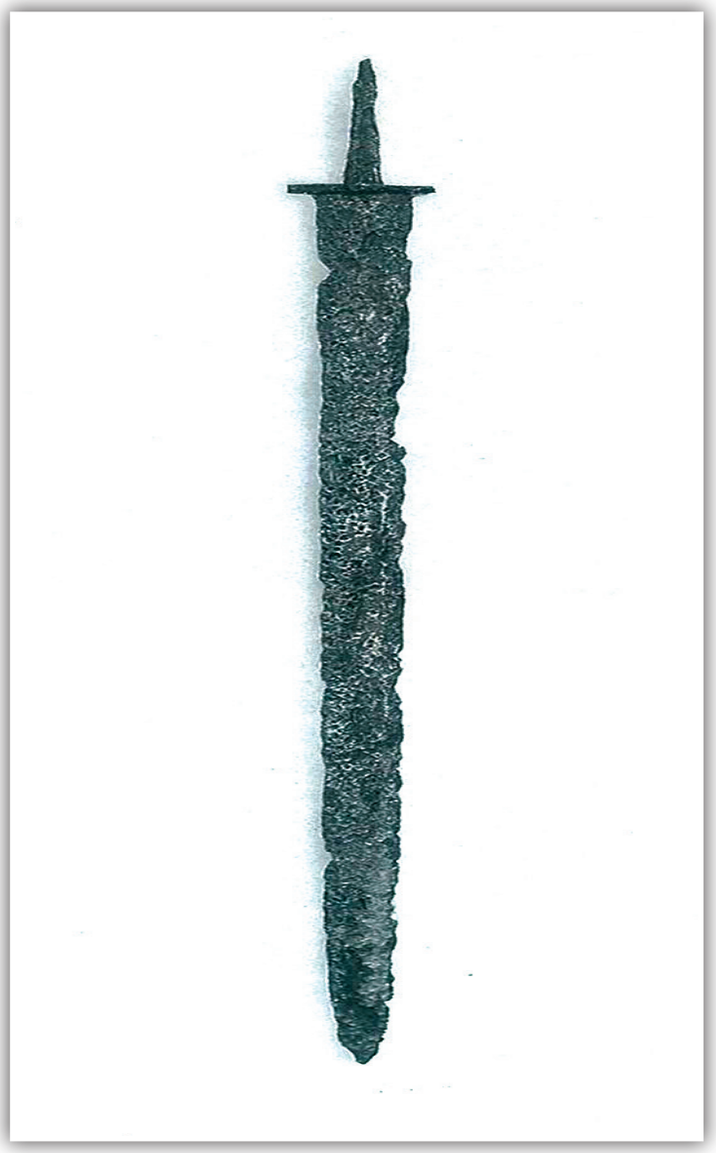
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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Hun-era sword found in Bátaszék.



Source: Ali Ahmetbeyoğlu, *Atlı Şehirliler, Buluntular ve Kalemin Dilinden Avrupa'da Hun Kültürü*, Yeditepe Publishers, Istanbul 2016.

Appendix 2: Gold necklace made of precious stones dating from the second half of the Vth century among the Bakodpuszta finds.



Source: Ali Ahmetbeyoğlu, *Atlı Şehirliler, Buluntular ve Kalemin Dilinden Avrupa'da Hun Kültürü*, Yeditepe Publishers, Istanbul 2016.

Appendix 3: Animal-headed belt buckle and detail recovered at Szeged-Öthalom.



Source: Ali Ahmetbeyoğlu, *Atlı Şehirliler, Buluntular ve Kalemin Dilinden Avrupa'da Hun Kültürü*, Yeditepe Publishers, Istanbul 2016.

Appendix 4: Gold bracelet from the Vth century found in Bakodpuszta.



Source: Ali Ahmetbeyoğlu, *Atlı Şehirliler, Buluntular ve Kalemin Dilinden Avrupa'da Hun Kültürü*, Yeditepe Publishers, Istanbul 2016.

The White Huns State



Source: Atilla Karataş Collection

THE WHITE HUNS STATE

(400 -558)

Müslüme Melis SAVAŞ*

The Emergence of the White Huns

The White Huns were one of the states that contributed towards the Turkification of the region called *Turkestan* following the schism between the Huns living in Central Asia Before the Common Era. The White Huns are known by different names in various sources. In Islamic sources, the White Huns are referred to as "Habtal," "Hebatıle" and "Haytal."[1] Whereas in Indian texts, they are referred

[1] Müslüme Melis Savaş, *White Hunslar,* Selenge Yayınları, İstanbul 2021, p. 15-28; Müslüme Melis Savaş, "Ak Hunslar", *Ortak Türk Tarihi*, Vol. I, Yeni Türkiye Publishers, Ankara 2019, p. 413; Enver Konukçu, *Kuşan ve Akhunlar Tarihi*, (PhD Thesis), Ankara 1973, p. 43; .Zeki Velidi Togan, "Eftalit Devletini Teşkil Eden Kabilelere Dair", *Atatürk Üniversitesi Fen Edebiyat Fakültesi Araştırma Dergisi*, (Özel Sayı, Fasükül 1), 13, (Erzurum 1985), p. 59; Zeki Velidi Togan, *Tarihte Usul*, İstanbul 1950, p. 263; El-Belâzurî, *Fütûhu'l Büldân*, translated by Mustafa Fayda, Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Ankara 1987, p. VII-XXIV, 585, 608; Ramazan Şeşen, *İslâm Coğrafyacılarına Göre Türkler ve Türk Ülkeleri*, 2nd Ed. Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, Ankara 2001, p. 14, 251-270; Richard N. Frye, "Selçuklulardan Evvel Orta Şarkta Türkler", *Belleten*, X/37-40, (Ankara 1946), p. 127; Mesudî, *Murûc Ez-Zeheb (Altın Bozkırlar),* translated by D. Ahsen Batur, Selenge Publishers, İstanbul 2004, p. 137-172; Guy. Le Strange, *The Lands of the Eastern Caliphate*, Cosimo Classics, New York 2010, p. 438.

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to as "Tarkshya," "Hūna," or "Sveta Hūna,"[2] and in Chinese annals as "Hua," "Ye-ta" and "I-ta".[3]

In Pahlavi and Avestan Ancient Iranian documents the White Huns appear as "Khion", "Khyon" or "Hiyon,"[4] and are depicted as "Huns" by Armenian historians.[5] Whilst the Byzantines who became acquainted with the White Huns while they were laying their political foundations called them "Hephthalites".[6] Using the work of Cosmas Indicopleustes as a reference, it can be ascertained that the clan mentioned in his memoirs as *the Huns in Northern India,* and compiled as result of his travels in Arabia, East Africa and Ceylon Island are in fact the White Huns.[7]

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2 Müslüme Melis Çeliktaş, *Ak Hunlar Tarihi Üzerine Türkiye ve Dünyada Yapılan Çalışmaların Değerlendirilmesi*, (Unpublished MA Theses), Ankara University Insitute of Social Sciences, Ankara 2011, pp. 5-13; Korhan Kaya, "Eski Hint Metinlerinde Türk", *Argos Gemicileri,* 10, (Ankara 2003), p. 3. Marc Aurel Stein, *Kalhana's Rajatarangini*, Vol. 1, Book 1-4, Motialal Banarsidas, Delhi 2009, p. 42; Yusuf Hikmet Bayur, *Hindistan Tarihi*, Vol. 1, Türk Tarih Kurumu Publishers, Ankara 1987, s. 42; Kaya, ibid, p. 9; Eduard Carl Sachau, *Alberuni's India*, Vol. 2, Adamant Media Corporation, New Delhi 2004, p. 11; Herman Kulke, Dietmar Rothermund, *Hindistan Tarihi*, İmge Publishers, Ankara 2001, pp. 123-124; Edward Bayles Cowell, F.H.Thomas, *The Harsha Carita of Bana*, Chapter 4, Motilal Banarsidas, Delhi 1993, p. 101.

3 Müslüme Melis Çeliktaş, "Kaynaklarda White Hunslar", *XVII. Türk Tarih Kongresi Bildiri Kitabı*, C. II, Kısım 1, Ankara 2018, pp. 81-82; Çeliktaş, op.cit., pp. 14-22; Konukçu, op.cit., p. 39; Kazuo Enoki, "The Origin of the White Hun sor Hephthalites", *East and West*, Vol. 3, Bellinghom/Washington 1955, p. 233; Kazuo Enoki, "On the Nationality of the Ephthalites", *Memories of the Research Department of the Toyo Bunko*, XVIII, (1959), pp. 6-7; Boris Abromovic Litvinsky, "The Hephthalite Empire", *History of Civilization of Central Asia*, Unesco Publishing, Paris 1996, p. 148; İsenbike Togan, Gülnar Kara, Cahide Baysal, *Eski T'ang Tarihi*, Türk Tarih Kurumu, Ankara 2005, s. xx; Kazuo Enoki, "The Liang chih-kung-t'u", *Memories of the Research Department of the Toyo Bunko*, 42, (1984), pp. 37-45, 116-122; Sören Stark, *Transoxanien nach dem TangHuiyao des Wang Pu*, Ralp A. Cannito, Norderstedt 2009, pp. 5-6; Karoly Czegledy, "Geschishte Der Hephthaliten", *Acta Antiqua*, Tom. 28, (Budapeşte 1980), pp. 214-215; Eduard Chavannes, *Documents sur Les Tou-kiue (Turks) Occiedentaux*, A Librairie d'Amérique et d'Orient Adrien Maisonneuve, Quebec 2006, pp. 222-223.

4 Konukçu, op.cit., p. 41; Frye, op.cit., p. 127.

5 Çeliktaş, op.cit., p. 29-30.

6 İsmail Mangaltepe, *Bizans Kaynaklarında Türkler*, Doğu Kütüphanesi, İstanbul 2009, p.10-11; Procopius, "History of Wars" Book 1, trans. H.B.Dewing, Loeb Classical, London 2005, p. 12-15; Gyula Moravcsik, *Byzantinoturcica II*, Print Book, Leiden 1983, p. 127; Kurbanov, *op.cit*., p. 110; R.C. Blockley, *The History of Menander The Guardsman*, Francis Cairns, Ottawa 1985, pp. 8, 16, 47, 65.

7 Saadettin Yağmur Gömeç, *Türk-Hun Tarihi,* Berikan Publishers, Ankara 2012, p. 358.

The debate surrounding the origins of the White Huns still causes a divergence of opinion today and there are many scholars conducting research on this topic. The literature on this issue defends the view that the White Hunslar originated from the Yuezhis[8], East Iranian tribes[9] and the Avars.[10] The White Huns are believed to have dominated the regions of Ghur,[11] Hua, Bakh,[12] Termez[13] and Himalayas.[14] However, a lack of definitive information exists regarding the date of the Huns' emergence. Despite this, it is known that the White Huns founded a state that reigned from the middle of the IVth to the end of the VIth century, spanning territories from Central Asia to the Sasanian Empire in the west, and to the inner depths of India in the South.

The Chinese dynastic histories *Liang Shu* (618-907 CE) and *Wei Shu* (386-556 CE), contemporaries of the White Huns, provide detailed information about the history of the White Huns. Given that the above histories provide valuable information absent in other sources, renders them the only definitive sources that should be consulted. According to the history Liang *Shu,* the White Huns originated from among the tribes that entered the Turpan region, provided military assistance in the northern battles and resided in the local area of Sang-chia-chien in the period of the Yuan Wei. In addition, the information provided by the *Liang Shu,* the *T'o-ba (Wei) Shu* narrates how the White Huns called the north of the Great Wall of China their abode, before moving towards the east of the Kunshan road and Hotan. Even though a consensus exists with regard to the White Huns originating from the Great Yüeh-chih (Ta-Yüeh-chih), nonetheless it can ascertained that their first homeland was indeed lands belonging to the Turks in neighbouring Gansu. The date that the White Huns nomads from the Altai region chose Sogdia as their abode is in the historical sources of the period. It is also known that the White Huns nomads lived with the other Hun tribes in the region. It wasn't until the Vth century that the White Huns that resided in Sogdia until the IVth century, came into contact politically with the Sasanians.

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8 V. De Saint Martin, *Les Huns Balancs ou Ephthalites*, Paris 1849, pp. 56-58, 66.

9 Litvinsky, op.cit., s. 147.

10 S. Gömeç, op.cit., s. 48.

11 Kazuo Enoki, "On The Nationality of The Ephthalites", p. 28.

12 Enoki, op.cit., pp. 29-30.

13 Enoki, ibid, pp. 29-30.

14 Watter, op.cit, p. 274.

According to O.G. von Wasendonk, the "Chionites" tribe in Sogdia resisted Sasanian rule. The "Chionites" mentioned by Greek and Roman writers are known by contemporary researchers as *White Huns*. The White Huns are introduced into Georgian and Armenian sources as a result of these events, and it is evident that the White Huns played an important role in the Caucasus. Zeki Velidi Togan uses the findings of J. Marquart to argue that in the Vth and VIth centuries the White Huns occupied towns known as "Alandur" in South Caucasus and in Azerbaijan in Mughan and Bałasakan near the Aras river such as *Varzaqan.*[15]

White Hun-Sasanian Conflicts

During 400 CE, the White Huns were located in the Dzungaria Steppes under Rouran rule (r. 420-38) in the south of Kazakistan and during the reign of Bahram Gur the Vth (r. 420-38) settled in the Horasan region. The White Huns subsequently became more powerful and in around 425 captured the Yüeh-chih territories, but were defeated by Bahram Gur in 427 after opposing the Sasanians. During the reign of Behram Gur's successor Yazgird the II (438-457), the White Huns captured the regions of Semerkant, Buhara and Belh. By 460 CE, the White Huns dominated the western region of the agriculutural basin to the east, Oxus River to the north and the territories between Sogd and the Tien Shan Mountains. It is at this juncture that the White Huns/Hephthalites became actors on the historical scene. It was the Sasanian Shah Firouz[16] that was responsible for the intensification of the relations between the White Huns and the Sasanians. The White Huns established contact with the Sasanian ruler King Yazgird in 457 CE and subsequently won a victory against the Sasanians.[17] Following the death of Yazgird, the rule of Sistan passes to Firouz while his other son Hormoz ascends to the throne. Upon hearing that the succession had passed to his brother, Firouz obtains the support of the elites of the time and attacks Oxus River, and in order to seize the throne seeks assistance from the White Hun ruler Aksungur. To achieve mediation between the two sides, Aksungur advises Firouz to establish himself Taloqan which is three miles from Merv er-Rud towards the direction of Belh. The

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15 Marget Biro, "Hunların Kafkasya'daki Varlığı", çev. Savaş Eğilmez, *Atatürk Üniversitesi Türkiyat Araştırmaları Enstitüsü Dergisi*, 22, (Erzurum 2003), p. 226.

16 Konukçu, *op.cit.*, s. 77.

17 Eva Aradi, "The History of White Huns", *Mikes International*, 4th Ed, C. VIII, Den Haag 2001, p. 40.

dignitaries in Iran were dissatisfied with Hormoz's rule and upon hearing that Firouz is in Taloqan, they join him. Consequently, Aksungur decides to provide assistance to Firouz in return for his demands being met.[18] Aksungur sends a strong army of thirty-thousand soldiers to Firouz. Through the support provided by the White Huns' army, Firouz wins the war of succession and ascends to the Sasanian throne (458 CE).[19] The White Hun army is rewarded with precious gifts and subsequently returns to its homeland following the ascension of Firouz to the throne. In accordance with the promise he made to Aksungur, Firouz bequeaths Termez and Vasgirt to the White Huns.[20] During this period, the ruler of the White Huns Aksungur is also in control of Toharistan, Badahshan and Bakteria. Following the consolidation of his power in his territories Firouz refused to pay the White Huns the agreed war tribute. It is for this reason that the White Huns again finds themselves in conflict with the Sasanian state.[21] Another reason for the breakdown in the relations between the two states stems from the fact that Firouz didn't keep the promise he gave during one of the peace negotiations of marrying his daughter or sister to Aksungur. Aksungur demands that Firouz fulfils this promise, but Firouz is against the idea of his daughter or sister marrying a Turk, and refuses to keep his promise. Firouz refuses to send the princess named Priskos, who went by the alias "Kunchas," to join Aksungur. On the contrary, Firouz was intent on sending a courtesan posing as the princess to Aksungur. Aksungur becomes aware of this and sends an envoy to the Sasanian palace who negotiates for Firouz to assist the White Huns militarily. Subsequently, Firouz sends a sufficient number of soldiers and a few commanders to assist Aksungur. However, upon arriving into White Hun territories, Firouz's commander and soldiers are ambushed. Some of Firouz's men are killed while others are sent back to Firouz injured. Firouz is quick to understand why Aksungur would do such a thing and soon realises that his commanders and soldiers paid the price for him sending an imposter princess to Aksungur. Firouz commences with campaign preparations to mend his broken pride and to teach the White Huns a valuable lesson. With Firouz at the head of

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18 Konukçu,*op.cit*., p.77.

19 Francis Henry Skrine-Edward Denison Ross, *The Heart Of Asia,* Routledge, London 2004, pp.130-138.

20 Joseph de Deguignes, *Hunların, Türklerin, Moğolların ve daha sair Tatarların Tarih-i Umumisi*, translated by Hüseyin Cahid, Vol. II, Ötüken Neşriyat, İstanbul 1923, p. 202; Litvinsky, *op.cit*., p. 143.

21 W. M. Mc Govern, *op.cit*., p. 411.

the army, they head towards where Georgian and Greek geographers refer to as "Hyrcania" in Turkmenistan. Firouz captures the White Hun's border town Balâm, a fact also mentioned by Deguignes. This is most likely Taloqan where he previously resided.[22] However, Firouz is forced to return before an opportunity to meet with Aksungur arises.[23]

In 475 CE, Firouz embarks on a new offensive against Aksungur. No information exists as to why this war occurred. Aksungur was intent on teaching Firouz another lesson. Then using the "Turanian tactic," the White Hun army prepares to attack. Aksungur and Firouz go head-to-head in a plain. At first, following the orders of Aksungur, the White Hun forces retreat. The White Huns army gives the impression that they are retreating to the mountainous area behind the lowland. As they leave the mountain pass behind a few of the White Huns' forces camouflage themselves. Firouz excited in the belief that he will win an easy victory against Aksungur, fails to take any defensive precautions when entering the mountain pass. Even his men could not muster the courage to tell him that he was making a mistake. The envoy of the Byzantine emperor Zenon (474-491) was also present in the Sasanian army. According to Procopius, the name of the envoy was Eusibios.[24] The envoy Eusibios is baffled at the extent to which Firouz is unguarded against the enemy and bolsters up the courage to tell him so. The Sasanian nobles and the commanders both support Eusibios's view, however it is too late as the Sasanian army is encircled. In these circumstances Firouz should have begged Aksungur for mercy, however Firouz is aware that Aksungur will only forgive him and his army on one condition. Firouz knew that his redemption rested on him personally pleading with Aksungur for mercy. At first, Firouz didn't want to acknowledge the seriousness of the situation because even if he begged Aksungur for mercy, he would have to live with the defeat for the rest of his life. Firouz later met with his clergy who advised that a Shah by means of status could only bow down to a Zoroastrian. At that moment Firouz had a bright idea, which was that he would not be belittled if he begged Aksungur for mercy during sun rise.

Firouz subsequently discusses this idea with his clergy who deem it to be appropriate. Firouz thus sends the Sasanian envoy to Aksungur to notify him that he has accepted to plead for mercy, and that the ceremony would take place close to

[22] Deguignes, *op.cit.*, s. 204.

[23] M. Melis Savaş, *White Hunslar*, Berikan Publishers, İstanbul 2021, pp. 52-53.

[24] H. B. Dewing, *op.cit.*, pp. 1-3.

dawn. Aksungur accepts this proposal and Firouz travels to Aksungur's location, and at dawn Firouz turns to face Aksungur and falls to his feet. Both the Sasanian and White Hun armies look on heeding warning from the sight before their eyes. Aksungur takes great pleasure in witnessing Firouz beg for his mercy.[25]

The Sasanian ruler Firouz is forced to turn back in 475CE due to problems occurring near Armenia. Firouz finalises his business with the White Huns, and sends Suhra, one of his commanders, to Sistan and leaves him in charge. During a time when he was making preparations for battle, the notables of the Sasanian palace advise Firouz that he should not embark on a new offensive against the White Huns. However, Firouz is intent on mending his wounded pride and resorts to trickery so that it would not be evident that he broke his promise to Aksungur. Firouz uses elephants to move the column that represented the border between the two states further into White Hun territory. The White Huns ruler declares war as a result of this violation. Before the Sasanian army reaches the battle field, Aksungur has deep trenches dug and has them camouflaged with foliage. The soldiers knew of the plan and only small pathways were left for the soldiers to pass through. The soldiers arrived at the battle field and took their position against the enemy. As soon as the battle begun *Aksungur* signals for his soldiers to fall back. Firouz is under the false impression that Aksungur is retreating to avoid defeat, and goes on the offensive. The deep trenches camouflaged with foliage collapse under the weight of the soldiers. To their detriment, the cavalry and part of the Sasanian army realise too late that they have entered a trap, and many soldiers along with Firouz are killed. Many clergy men and Firouz's daughter were captured by the White Huns, and the Sistan governor Suhra and the Sasanian forces alongside him immediately attacked the White Huns. According to sources, the army comprised of ten thousand soldiers. Suhra heads towards Merv, and proceeds to write Aksungur an insulting letter. Aksungur responds by stating that it was Firouz and not himself that started the conflict. Suhra travels from Merv to Kuşmihan, passing over the Ceyhun river to the frontier of Beykend. However, he inevitably makes peace with Aksungur and returns to his homeland.[26]

With the assistance of Suhra, Firouz's youngest son Kavad ascends to the Sasanian throne.[27] The reign of Kavad (488-531) witnessed the beginning of social

[25] Savaş, *op.cit.*, pp. 52-53.

[26] Deguignes, *op.cit* 208; Konukçu, *op.cit.*, pp. 80-81.

[27] Aradi, *op.cit*., p. 41.

decay in the Sasanian state. In 488 CE a man of Manichaean faith named Mezdek promised the people salvation, emphasising the social unrest of the time, and begun spreading his ideas relating to "dual" belief, at a time when society was suffering from economic hardship. According to Mezdek's view, two things disturbed the peace of people and these were: "wealth" and "women". He believed that universal evil would be eradicated if a common ownership principle was applied to both wealth and women. Mazdek and his disciples used this communist propaganda to incite the people against landowners and the wealthy. This witnessed the killing of clergy men and notables, the assault of women, and the looting of houses and mansions. Believing that the prosperity of the state would improve, Kavad makes the error of believing Mazdek and is imprisoned in the dungeons. However, Kavad escapes with the help of his sister.[28] Like his father Firouz, Kavad is also forced to seek refuge with the White Huns. After biding his time, Kavad, with the assistance of the White Huns' army enters Iran and defeats his Tahmasb and takes the throne again. However, history repeats itself as in 497 CE, Kavad is again deposed and imprisoned but again escapes with the help of his sister, seeking refuge with the White Huns. After a period of three years, and with the help of the White Huns, Kavad again ascends to the Sasanian throne.[29] In exchange for the assistance of the White Huns, Kavad must surely have paid a hefty tribute.[30] Due to the payment of the tribute, the Sasanian economy suffers greatly, and they lose Merv and Herat, two of their most important towns. Following their victory in Iran, the White Huns prepare for a new campaign against India.[31]

The White Huns-Gupta Conflicts

The ripening of Mihirakula's power and reputation which coincided with the Golden Age of the White Huns was between 515-530 CE. During this period, the sovereign of the White Huns Mihirakula, resided in Gandhāra and transformed the town called Sialkot, which lies to the northeast of what is today called Sakala or the Punjab, into the capital of the state. At the beginning of the 5th century, Mihirakula adds Kashmir to his territories and between 517-520 CE, uses an army of two thousand elephants and thousands of cavalry to start his campaign against

[28] Kafesoğlu, *op.cit.*, p. 83.

[29] Konukçu, *op. cit*., pp. 97-98.

[30] Konukçu, ibid, p. 82.

[31] Aradi, *op. cit*., p. 41.

India[32] As a result of the battle, the Indus River served as a border between the two states, and the White Huns settled as far as the centre of north India.

Mihirakula declares that what was then known as Sakala, but is today *Sialkot* in Pakistan, his capital. The primary reason for this lies in the strategic importance of the town. This is because mid and northwest India can be easily controlled from Sakala. The region was also advantageous for Mihirakula due to the fact that it was near both Gandhāra and the other Hun territories. Mihirakula exerted great control over the Indian lands, and all the people were wary of Mihirakula, who enforced harsh laws and was a disciplined leader and commander. Almost all of north India was under the control of Mihirakula, and the local people were bound to pay his taxes.[33]

The period 530-542 CE signals a new era for the White Huns. During the aforementioned period, the White Hun ruler Mihirakula came face to face with the Gupta sovereign. Even though the identity of these rulers is debatable, the fact that Mihirakula twice attempted to conquer this empire, is not. However, it is not exactly clear who defeated Mihirakula. According to Gvaliyar, the Mandsaur Inscriptions stated that this sovereign was Yashodharman, whereas Chinese records claim it was Bālāditya known as Narasimhagupta Bālāditya.[34] Based on both sources, scholars are in consensus that the Guptas were defeated by the White Huns. However, some scholars claim that this was a single event that is portrayed differently in sources.[35] Allan and Mookerji argue that Mihirakula was first defeated by Narasimhagupta in the east, and then later by Yashodharman in the west (Mālvā).[36] In addition to this, Chinese sources place the defeat of Mihirakula by Bālāditya at 530 CE, and Mihirakula's defeat by *Yashodharman*, at post-530 CE. The defeat of Mihirakula by Yashodharman is etched in the Mandsaur Inscriptions erected in honour of Yashodharman. Even though there is no ev-

[32] Krishna Chandra Sagar, *Foreign Infkuence on Ancient Asia***,** Northern Book Center, New Delhi 1992, p. 217.

[33] *Racatarangini*, Book I, Şloka, p. 303; Thapar, *op.cit.,* pp. 150, 153.

[34] John Allan, *Catalogue of The Coins of The Gupta Dynasties and of Sasanka King of Gauda*, Munshiram Manoharlal, London 1914, pp. iv-ivi.

[35] Smith, *Early History of India*, Oxford Press, Oxford 1924, p. 337.

[36] Allan*, op.cit*., p. ivi, lix; Mookerji, *op.cit.,* p. 121; Majumdar, "The Disintegration of The Empire**",** p. 36; Dwijendra Narayan Jha, *Early India a Concise History*, Manohar Publisher, New Delhi 2010, p. 160; Although this is generally accepted, there is a debate among some scholars as to which Gupta ruler Mihirakula fought first and which later.

idence pertaining to when exactly the pillar was erected, it is known that the battle in Mālva took place 532-533 CE.[37] Despite the fact that the ruler of the White Huns was defeated in the above battle, he did not give up. He advances towards and captures the Kashmir region.[38] Not long passes before the White Hun sovereign Mihirakula goes head-to-head with Yashodharman. With Mihirakula as leader and as a result of all the incursions he made, the White Huns state may not have destroyed the Gupta dynasty, however it was certainly damaged. It is because of this that the Gupta dynasty ruler did not enjoy a long reign.

One of the most controversial aspects of Mihirakula's reign is the oppression he inflicted on the Buddhists during his reign. Many sources state that the Turkish ruler took a dislike to the Buddhists and had their temples demolished. Foreign sources especially Indian accounts depict Mihirakula as vindictive and brutal because of this oppression.[39] The Chinese Buddhist pilgrim Hsuan-Tsang in his memoirs writes the following in relation to the subject:[40]

A few centuries back a ruler by the name of Mo-hi-lo-ku-lo (Mihirakula) conquered India and declared Sakala his capital. He wanted to learn about the principles of Buddism (Fu-fa) and summoned a Buddhist monk. No Buddhist monk was brave enough to go to his side. Whilst everyone was afraid of the ruler's behaviour, only one monk volunteered to meet with him. A former butler of the ruler who had since gained power was available. Upon being summoned he undertook the mission to represent Buddhism to the ruler. However, upon realising who the monk was, "I respected Buddhism (Fu-Fa) and wanted to learn about the sacred principles of the Dhamma, so I summoned a religious teacher, but only the Sangha came to me. I thought Buddhist monks were teachers of the faith. But the gesture of these monks made me lose trust in them.

According to Hsuan-Tsang, Mihirakula was furious when the Buddhist monks failed to comply with his request, and as a consequence ordered that all the monks

37 Upendra Thakur, *The Hunas in India*, Chowkhamba Sanscrit Series, Varanasi 1967, p. 168.

38 Rima Hooja, *A History of Rajastan*, Rupa & Company, New Delhi 2006, p. 144.

39 Aitreyi Biswas, *The Political History of Hunas in India*, Munshiram Mancharlal, New Delhi 1973, p. 68; John Marshall, *A Guide to Taxila*, India 1918, pp. 38-39; Litvinsky, "The Hephthalit…", p.150; Thakur, *op.cit.,* p. 132; Hajime Nakamura, *Indian Buddhism,* Motilal Banarsidas, New Delhi 1999, p. 146; Gail Omvedt, *Buddhism in India*, Sage Publigations, New Delhi 2003, p. 170.

40 Beal, *op.cit*., p. 169.

in the five regions of India be killed.[41] Following this, Mihirakula sets out to travel to Magadha. He also destroys the monasteries that he passes on the road to Magadha. It is apparent that both Indian and Chinese Buddhists have over exaggerated on this point.[42] If Mihirakula was as brutal towards the Buddhists as they claimed, then surely this would appear in detail in the work *Rācataraïgini* of the Indian poet Kalhana or in the works of the Greek merchant Cosmos Indicopleustes. Therefore, it is wrong to jump to conclusions about the policy of Mihirakula towards the Buddhists and Buddhism unless all the facts are at hand.

After Magadha, *Mihirakula* continued his struggles in *Pataliputra.* The city of Pataliputra, which had been surrounded by water-filled moats since the Maurya Empire era, also became part of the White Huns' territory.[43] However, the region was full of swamps, which rendered it fruitless to Mihirakula and his state. As a result of this, Mihirakula persisted with his campaigns, annexing Tirhut, located in the Bihar state of northern India, to his territories. Tirhut passes to Mihirakula by *Sung Yun* as "Tiel-lo" and is one of forty regions that Mihirakula has captured. Even though it is known that Mihirakula proceeded as far as Kaushambi in the province of Uttar Pradesh in north India, archaeological excavations carried out in the region to the north of the Ganges, have not unearthed evidence regarding this fact.[44]

Although it is known that the Gupta ruler Bālāditya, who was no strong leader, defeated Mihirakula, the White Huns never actually conceded defeat, and continued with their raids. After some time, the White Huns come face-to-face with the Gupta sovereign Yashodharman.[45] As far as can be ascertained, during the reign of Yashodharman, Mihirakula failed to prevail in vital lands in the south such as, Sinhala, Kola, Karmāta ve Lāta, thus triggering the beginning of the slow demise of the White Hun state.[46] This goes on record as the second biggest defeat

41 S. Beal, *op.cit*., s. 169; Sagar, *op.cit.,* s. 218; Ramesh Chandra Majumdar, "The Imperial Crisis", *The Vākātaka-Gupta Age*, Motilal Banarsidas, Delhi 2007, p. 196; Thakur, *op.cit*., s. 176.

42 Thakur, *op.cit*., p. 167.

43 Thakur, *op.cit*., p. 177.

44 Thakur, *op.cit.,* pp. 176-180.

45 Since there are those who argue that Bālāditya was indeed the same person as Yashodharman, it is not possible to provide precise information on this point.

46 Fleet, *op.cit.,* pp. 147-148.

suffered by Mihirakula after Bālāditya.[47] Mihirakula subsequently dies after the defeat.[48] With the exception of the Kashmarian chronicle *Racatarangini* no other information exists pertaining the White Hun rulers after Mihiragula.

The Demise of the White Huns

Following the death of Mihiragula, it is necessary to evaluate the White Huns state within the framework of two entities; north and south. The middle of the 6th century which witnessed the White Huns state schism into two was characterised by important events. The first of these important events was the defeat of the Juan-Juans by the Gök Turks who established sovereignty in central Asia. The other significant event was the ascension of a reputable shah like Anushirvan to the throne in the west Iranian geography. It is striking that at the time when these events were occurring in Iran, that changes were taking place that would shaped its future. During the above period the greatest state of central Asia was that of the Rourans. In 460 CE, the Rourans subjugated the Turks (Börülüler) who settled in the Altai region and had plundered Hotan. However, the turmoil and fragmentation of China in the early 6th century had an adverse effect on the Rourans. This situation though proved to be advantageous to the White Huns. In the year 520, the uncle *Szu-li-fa P'o-lo-men*, and cousin Szu-*li-fa* of Anaguey rebel upon him coming to the throne, and the Rouran dynasty is subsequently weakened by the ensuing civil war. Meanwhile, the Tiele tribes devise a plan to attack the Rourans, and in 521, they are attacked by the Tiele who were led by *A-chih-lo*.

Szu-li-fa, P'o-lo-men sought assistance from the Tabgach empire and the earthquake that occurred in the year 523 strengthened the pretext for this. In fact, Anaguey took refuge with the Tabgach in order to save his own life. As far as it can be ascertained, he was exiled to Mongolia for causing trouble. In 534, an envoy was sent from the Western Tabgach state to the Göktürks, and in the intervening period, the Rourans were victorious against the northern Tiele tribes. In 546, the Tiele rebel, thus triggering the Gökturks to send a warning to the Rourans, and to offer them assistance. The sources even go as far as to state that during this period fifty thousand Tiele households came under the rule of Bumın. It is for this

[47] However, as we have already mentioned, it is not clear which defeat came first and which came later.

[48] Although this date is not certain, it is given as 540 AD by some and 547 AD by others.

reason that Bumın asks for the hand of the Rouran leader's daughter in marriage. Anaguey is absolutely furious at Bumin, and responds as follows rejecting the proposal of marriage: "You are my slaves, you are blacksmiths; how dare you make such a demand?" Upon his proposal being rejected, Bumın turns his attention to the West Tabgach (North Tabgach) state. Bumın sends an ambassador to make a request that a marriage is realised to foster relations between the two states. The Western Tabgach state realises that this offer is in line with their own interests and accepts the proposal. The tightly knit political structure of the Gökturks eventually becomes a powerful force in Central Asia.[49]

Although some claim that the first conflict between the White Huns and the Göktürks occurred in 555 CE, there is no concrete evidence to support this view. The following can be deduced from some of the information in Islamic sources: the first battle of vital importance between the two Turkish states must have been in 558 CE, and in the west during this century, the Istemi Yabgu delegation, which was affiliated with the centre of the Göktürk Khaganate, is relevant at this juncture.[50]

The predicament of controlling the Silk Road, one of the most important sources of income in the Middle Ages, was a priority for all states in that region, including the Göktürk Khaganate. The Göktürk rulers couldn't muster the courage to take on the White Huns alone, that is why they chose to form an alliance with the Sasanians. The same can be said for the Iranians. This is because the Sasanians had just recently recovered from civil war. The Sasanians were intent on regaining the reputation that had been damaged during the period of Firouz and Kavad. Hence, they accepted the offer of Istemi Yabgu. This agreement was strengthened by the formation of familial ties through marriage, as Anushirvan married the daughter of Istemi.[51] The Göktürks and Sasanian armies came to an agreement, and after

[49] Gömeç, *op.cit.*, pp. 32-34.

[50] His name is mentioned as Sizabul, Dizavul in Byzantine sources and Sinjibu in Arabic sources. Denis Sinor rejects this similarity and believes that there are phonetic differences between these two names. In Chinese sources, as in Byzantine sources, this name does not indicate Istemi, Tardu and his son. Denis Sinor: "If Sizabul was Istemi, one of the founding fathers of the Empire would have been honoured two centuries later, and his son Tardu would certainly have attended his funeral... It will eventually turn out that Sizabul and Istemi are not the same person." Denis Sinor "The Establishment and Dissolution of the Turk Empire," *The Cambridge History of Early Inner Asia,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1994, p. 305.

[51] Konukçu, *op.cit.*, p. 99, 101; Percy Sykes, *A History of Persia*, C. 2, Mac Millan, Londra 1963, p. 454; Kurbanov, *op.cit.*, p. 185.

the Göktürks captured the White Hun territories in Transoxiana, they come face-to-face near Nahshab. Following a formidable struggle, the White Huns' leader Avar is defeated and subsequently dies in the year 558. It goes without saying that all of the above events took place under the supervision of the true ruler Mo-kan, and with the knowledge of Istemi.[52]

Anushirvan chooses not to come to the battlefield in Termez, and instead, he marched towards Balkh, one of the White Huns' strongholds and captures Tokharistan, Zabulistan, and Chaghaniyan. Despite the fact that it was the Göktürks that essentially dealt the White Huns with the most severe of blows, it was the Sasanian shah Anushirvan that came out with the most gain. Anurshirvan was unwilling to settle for his share of the gains, thus prompting Mo-kan to order Istemi to make an agreement with the Byzantines against the Sasanians. As a consequence of the ensuing long wars between Byzantine and Iran, the Sasanian empire becomes fragmented.[53] While some of the White Huns-Avar tribes that had been defeated by the Göktürks stayed in Turkestan under their hegemony, other tribes travelled to the Byzantine border north of the Caspian Sea and requested land so that they could settle. The Göktürks through the envoy that they sent to the Byzantines, declared that they intended to destroy the remaining White Huns-Avar tribes. This stance instilled fear in the Avars, who migrated towards Europe thus laying the foundations for a new Turkish state. As far as can be ascertained, the tribes in the south of Turkestan and the north of India continued their existence for some time, continuing their struggles against the local beyliks to the end. However, they lost their presence on these lands over time either through assimilation or though deserting the region to be with remaining relatives in Turkestan.

The Successors of the White Huns

Following its disintegration, the issue of who the successors of the White Hun state was still resembles a black hole even today. However, researchers point towards the Turkic tribes such as Kalach, Karluk, Kangli as the successor tribes to the White Huns, which, according to the famous Oghuz Khan Epic, are the tribes that Oghuz later named after himself. With respect to the Kalach tribe, in the Uyghur

[52] Gömeç, *op.cit.*, p. 50.

[53] Konukçu, *op.cit.*, p. 101; Gömeç, *op.cit*, p. 52; Muharrem Ergin, *Orhun Abideleri*, Boğaziçi Yayınları, İstanbul 2009, p. 9.

version of the *Oğuznâme*, "Kal-aç" has the meaning of "to open something and to stay back." Whereas in Reshiddin's *Oğuznâme* it is defined as being related to "the act of being hungry".[54] In addition, one of the most striking aspects of the Kalach in Turkish history, is that they later laid the foundations of the Ghaznavid army. Besides this, from the 12th-16th centuries, the Kalach were also soldiers in many north Indian dynasties.[55]

It has also been claimed that the Karluks are also the ancestors of the White Huns. They are said to comprise of nine tribes, three of them are Heytaliye or Heskeli, whereas the another ones are the Bulak, Yılak, Kükergin and Tuhsilerdir tribes. The meaning of the name *Karluk* originates from the Oghuz Khan Epic, and more specifically from *Şecere-i Terakime,* which carries the meaning of "Snowy Mountain. The Chinese pilgrim Hsuan Tsang transcribed the word as *Hsi-mo-ta-lo,* stating that it carried the meaning of "those who live under the snowy mountains." However, the view that the meaning of the name Karluk originates from the Sanskrit translation, seems to be a reasonable one. During the Göktürk and Uyghurs period, the Karluks inhabited the region in the vicinity of the Ulungur river, west of the Altai Mountains, and southeast to the Tarbagatai Mountains. According to Islamic sources, the Karluks who were deemed to be the most handsome of the Turks, took the place of, and occupied, the Talas region upon the weakening of the Türgish that originated from the Ten Arrows tribes.[56]

It has also been put forward that the Kangli which also feature in the *Oghuz Khan Epic* as a Turkish tribe, are also descendants of the White Huns. According to the *Oghuz Khan Epic,* this name originates from "a cart that pulls animals".[57] It is probable that Pechenegs after this point in history formed part of the Pecheneg union, as the Pechenegs who didn't migrate to Europe became part of the Oghuz community. It is also the case that the Kanglites were one of the tribes that was responsible for founding the Khwarazshahs. As mentioned previously, prior to the complete fall of the White Huns empire, it arguably was divided into two. Therefore, the White Huns were able to continue their existence for a while longer un-

[54] Saadettin Gömeç, *Türk Kültürünün Ana Hatları,* Berikan Publishers, Ankara 2006, p. 198; Saadettin Gömeç, *Türk Destanlarına Giriş,* Berikan Publishers, Ankara 2009, p. 96.

[55] Enver Konukçu, "Halaçlar", *Türkler*, Yeni Türkiye Publishers, Ankara 2006, p. 848; Kurbanov, *op.cit.*, p. 240.

[56] Gömeç, *Kök Türk Tarihi*, p. 142.

[57] Gömeç, *Türk Kültürünün Ana Hatları,* p. 205.

der the rule of various dynasties, one of them said to be the Rajputs. They lived in the Rajistan province of India and had completely assimilated into Indian society. Even today there are accounts of the Rajputs living in this area of India as being of Hun descent, and village names such as Hunavasa, Hunaganva and Hunajunmu still survive today. Those Rajputs that did not wish to be assimilated moved back to their own homelands in the north of Bactria and the Oxus River.[58] The European Avars can be argued to be the most important descendants of the White Huns. Today, most scholars are in consensus that the European Avars and the White Huns are connected. It can be ascertained from the letter written by Tardu in 598 CE to the Emperor Maurice that there was an established link between them. Based on Chinese sources, following their devastating defeat the Rourans didn't migrate to Europe, but instead fled to Korea, which both the Chinese and Gök Turks called Bök İl. Nevertheless, the existence of two crucial aspects of the White Huns: Avars and Hun, were cited in both the works of *Menander* and *Theophylactus* within the context of the Avars being the descendants of the Huns. Also, it is interesting to note that when providing information on the Onoghurs (west Tolos), both the Avars and the Huns are cited as their ancestors. Again according to Chinese sources, the "Hepthalites" are among the Caucasus Tolos groups, and the White Huns empire began to disintegrate long before 563 CE. Another striking aspect of the White Huns- Avar relationship is the possibility that the mention of the Avars in the Köl Tigin and Bilge Kagan Inscriptions may be a reference to the White Huns themselves. A strong possibility exists that this may be the case. In fact, it has even been maintained that the Avars are in fact a Türgiş tribe. Finally, it is pertinent to state that White Huns-Avar relations had a great effect on the Byzantine empire. Therefore, even the Turkmens that migrated towards Eastern Anatolia in the XIth century were considered to be synonymous with White Huns/Hepthalites.[59]

The Administrative Structure and Socio-Cultural Life of the White Huns

The state organisation of the White Huns, like the other Huns that migrated to the west, was initially formed of small tribes. The White Huns/Hepthalites tribes

[58] Aradi, *op.cit.,* pp. 47-49; Romila Thapar, *A History of India*, Vol.1, Penguin Books, London 1974, p. 257.

[59] Gömeç, *op.cit.*, pp. 46-47.

were as follows: Kadis-hun[60] Zavul (Zabul, Zabulistan), Çol (Çöl? In the region of Curcaniye), Kermikhon (Karmir-Hyon= Red Huns), Askil= Eskil.[61]

Later on, the White Huns/Hepthalites part ways from the other Central Asian tribes and form their own state neighbouring Afghanistan, Pakistan and India. As attested by Byzantine sources, the White Huns state was ruled by a sovereign who was given the title of *hakan*, and resided in the fortified towns of their territories. Withholding exceptional circumstances, in times of peace rulers were chosen by tribal lords in consultation with the people. According to Chinese accounts, in the White Huns state the order of succession didn't pass from father to son, but instead passed to the most capable person in their lineage.[62] As can be deduced from the son of a ruler being granted the title "tigin," the principle of the caliphate was in operation.[63]

Based on the testimony of the famous traveller and pilgrim Sung Yun, several states paid the White Huns/Hepthalites state more than twenty different types of tribute. The administration of the White Huns/ Hepthalites state can be considered in two categories: a central administrative system and a regional administrative system. The central administrative system was characterised by the ruler residing in the capital, with commanders at the head of each small tribe. According to the inscriptions, the commanders were given titles such as *oazorko, fromalaro, hazaroxto* and *asbarobido*.[64]

The White Huns encountered various cultures and religions over time in the regions they inhabited. Subsequently, they adopted aspects of the religions, languages, traditions, and customs of the societies they interacted with, incorporating the elements they felt closely aligned with their own identity. Particularly between the 4th-6th centuries, since Central Asia was a centre for a plethora of religions, the White Huns came under the influence of these religions. The religions and faiths that were prevalent in Central Asia such as Buddhism, Hinduism, Manichaeism, and Christianity (Nestorianism), among others, were also practiced among the White

60 This tribe, which is mentioned as Hyon in Persian sources around Herat and as Eftalit in Procopius, later migrated to the west of Iran.

61 İbrahim Kafesoğlu, *Türk Milli Kültürü*, Ötüken Yayınları, İstanbul 2012, p. 82.

62 Litvisky, *op.cit*., p. 149.

63 Vadim M.Massom, "Archaelogical Cultures of Southern Siberia and Mongolia", *History of Humanity of Central Asia,* C. IV, Unesco Publishing, Paris 1996, p. 446.

64 Litvinsky, *op.cit*., p. 149.

Huns. During the White Huns period, Buddhism was especially common in their southern territories. However, the relationship of the White Huns with Buddhism has led to a divergence of opinion among scholars. The Chinese sources mention gold plated Buddhist Stupas (venerated monuments or shrines) and upright stones in the towns where the White Huns rulers resided.[65] Some scholars also support this view.[66] However, according to the narrative of the Chinese traveller Sung-Yun, the White Huns were irreligious.[67] It is likely that Sung-Yun reached such a conclusion because he was a Buddhist and may have regarded non-Buddhists as not having a faith. On the other hand, there are also scholars who allege that the White Huns did not subscribe to Buddhism and even went as far as to demolish the Buddhist shrines in the towns and oppressed the Buddhists.[68]

The White Huns that migrated to India showed a preference for Hinduism. The vital evidence exists in the fact that Shiva and her ox are depicted on coins. These coins are primarily from Mihirakula's period.[69] Additionally, the coins of Mihirakula from the Gandhara region also feature Vishnu's symbols, the chakra (discus) and sankha (conch shell).[70] The Chinese source "Liang Shu" states that the White Huns worshipped the sky (Tien-shen) and fire (Huo-shen). According to this source, the White Huns left home each morning to worship the deity and then made ritual offerings to the deity they worshipped.[71] Particularly, there is information that pertains to the fact that the White Huns ruler Toramana worshiped the sun, and another ruler Multan had a sun temple built.[72]

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65 János Harmatta, "Annexation of The Hephthalite Vassal Kingdoms By The Western Türks", *History of Humanity of Cetral Asia*, C. VI, Paris 1996, pp. 475-476.

66 Vladimir Fedorovich Minorsky, "Khurāsān at the Time of the Arab Conquest", *Iran and Islam in Memory of the Late,* Edinburg University Press, Edinburg 1971, s. 481; Matteo Compareti, "Traces of Buddhist Art in Sogdiana", *Sino-Platınic Papers*, 181, (2008), p. 12.

67 Litvinsky, *op.cit*., p. 145.

68 Enoki, *op.cit*., p. 49. Litvinsky, ibid., p. 150; John Marshall, *A Guide to Taxila*, Superintendent Government Printing, Calcutta 1918, pp. 38-39.

69 Kurbanov, *op.cit*., p. 235.

70 Sankha: A pipe made of seashell held in the hand of Lord Vishnu.

71 Litvinsky, *op.cit*., p. 150; Enoki, *op.cit*., p. 45-49.

72 Ramesh Chandra Majumdar- Anant Sadashiv Altekar, The Vàkàtaka-Gupta Age, Delhi 2007, p. 199.

Other scholars claim that the White Huns fell under the influence of Brahmanism which originated from an amalgamation of the Iranian's sun goddess Mithra[73] and the Indian faith. Therefore, it is argued that Mithra not only embodied Sūrya,[74] but also that Shiva and Vishnu were under Iranian influence, and that the primary religion of the White Huns was sun worship and that this belief in the deity later merged with the Mithraic faith.[75]

Christianity was common among a section of White Huns/Hephthalite society. The "History of Mar Aba" backs this view and states that in 549 CE, the Catholicos Mar Aba requested that the Nestorian patriarch send a clergyman for the Christian White Huns/Hephthalites, who had converted to Christianity. Apparently, the White Huns accepted this offer. Subsequently, a proportion of the White Huns/Hephthalites convert to Christianity in accordance with Nestorian doctrine.[76] According to the Armenian historian Yeghishe, the spread of Christianity among the White Huns/Hephthalites is related to the fact that the Armenians joined the war against the Iranians and Zoroastrians.[77] In addition to Zoroastrianism, another religion called Manichaeism was also active in the Sasanian territories in Iran and Central Asia. Manichaeism quickly spread also immersing the White Huns/Hephthalites. However, the White Huns were not in any way linked to this faith.

Information about the structure of White Hun society can be gleaned from the travel books of the Chinese Buddhist pilgrims. The famous traveller Sung Yun states that White Huns lived in tents in unfortified towns and migrated to warmer regions to find water and grassland in the winter, and to cooler regions in the summer. However, some Chinese sources argue the opposite of the above stating that the White Huns lived in fortified towns.[78] For all intents and purposes, the social

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73 The God mentioned here as Mihira or Mithra is most probably Mitra, the God of Hinduism. Mitra is a sun God in Hinduism. This is certainly confirmed by the Persian view in the Avesta, where Mithra is also said to be a sun God. The etymological meaning of his name is uncertain, but it is "friend, ally, companion." Korhan Kaya, *Hint Mitoloji Sözlüğü*, 2nd Ed., İmge Publishers, Ankara 2003, pp. 127-128.

74 "Sūrya" is the "Sun god" in Hinduism.

75 Aydody Kurbanov, *The Hephthalites: Archaelogical and Historical Analysis*, (Thesis), Freie Univesersität Berlin, Berlin 2010, p. 235.

76 Alphonse Mingana, *The Early Spread of Christianity in Central Asia and the Far East, Asia Research Associates*, C. 9, Gorgias Prl Llc, Manchester 1921, p. 6.

77 Kurbanov, *op.cit*., p. 96.

78 Kurbanov, *op.cit.*, p. 115.

lives of the White Huns resemble that of other Turkish societies. Most likely, the White Huns composed of people from different ethnicities including Persians, Indians, Arabs, Chinese, and Tibetans. As a result, the economic status of the people varied. Also, it can be ascertained that a particular standard of living did not exist given that there were both affluent and poor people in society. Most likely, the affluent individuals were from the ruling family, whereas those less affluent were ordinary citizens. We can deduce this from the fact that Sung Yun states that the White Huns sovereigns sat on golden thrones, wore bespoke garments made from high-quality fabrics and wore jewellery made crafted from precious stones. According to Sung Yun, this was common among ruling families worldwide.[79]

The physical attributes of the White Huns slightly differ from the other Huns. The White Huns were fair both in complexion and in hair colour. In fact, some scholars argue that this is the reason why the White Huns are called as such, although this seems unlikely. It is more probable that the White Huns' name comes from the Turkish state being in the west and the fact that the west was associated with a fairer complexion. Besides this, according to the Byzantine historian Procopius, the White Huns did not interact with the other Huns and there was no intermarriage between them.[80]

Chinese sources reveal that the social structure of the White Huns/Hephthalites also included polygamy. However, current understanding of polygamy today differs from its practice in the White Huns state, because it was women who were polygamous and not men back then. According to sources, two or more brothers could marry one woman. A woman would wear headgear with the number of horns on the hat denoting how many men she was married to.[81] Again according to Chinese Sources, a child born from a polygamous marriage was always considered to be that of the eldest brother.[82] This was a result of the Levirate marriage custom that was implemented among the ancient Turks.

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79 Litvisky, op.cit., pp. 149-150; Gömeç, *Türk Kültürünün,* p. 88.

80 Frye, *op.cit.,* p. 126.

81 Sören Stark, *Transoxantan nach dem Tang Huiyao des Wang Pu*, Norderstedt 2009, pp. 5-6.

82 Kurbanov, *op.cit*., p. 208.

Conclusion

The Turkish presence of the Turks in India began with the Saka people. However, the Turks were active during the White Huns period in Indian territories. Although the historical emergence of the White Huns constituted the origins of the Huns migrating to the West, is considered to be the 4th century, the sources take us back further to the 1st century. The White Huns who dominated the geographical territories from the Gansu province in China to Turkestan to the west, to Transoxiana and to central India, were known by various names in different periods. Studies reveal that the White Huns were known by different names such as *Hephthalites*, *Ye-ta, Haytal,* and *Hūna.* Some researchers stress that the White Huns and the Hephthalites in particular were not part of the same group. However, the primary sources from India where the White Huns were most active, do not make such a differentiation. The administrative system of the White Huns' state employed a dual governance structure like that of the ancient Turkish states. This system of governance rendered the management of their lands easier. Although the main centres of the White Huns state appear to be Gur, Hoa, Balkh, and Termez, the Bengü stones found in the cities of Eran and Gwalior in Indian territory also represents evidence of their presence in this region. Through the victories gained in Indian territories, the White Huns state was instrumental in bringing down the Gupta empire, the second largest Indian empire. Even the Gupta Emperors, who ruled over almost all of India, had inscriptions carved on their tablets, acknowledging the strong leadership qualities of the White Huns rulers. Despite being enemies, the ruling elite of the Gupta empire were in awe of the military success of the White Hun rulers.

The White Huns had control of a significant portion of the Silk Route which resulted in the power and advanced economic prosperity associated with this privileged position. In addition, the White Huns came under the cultural and religious influence of the lands they inhabited. The fondness the White Huns sovereigns felt for Hinduism is especially apparent through the Eran Stone Pillar Inscription of Toramana being inscribed on a Hindu temple. Also, in addition to the White Huns using motifs and symbols on coins to emphasise their Turkishness, both Indian and Iranian cultures played a role in influencing this aspect.

An examination of the everyday lives of the White Huns reveals that not only were they heavily influenced by Indian culture, but that the Indians were also influenced by the White Huns in many areas. To conclude, the White Huns state is

not only of immense importance for Turkish history in terms of the vast territories it occupied, its socio-cultural richness and military successes, but is also a significant part of Iranian and Indian history. The White Huns, particularly after the Saka period, contributed to the merging of Indian territories into Turkish lands and laid the foundation for the establishment of states such as the Ghaznavids, Ghurids, the Delhi Sultanate, and the Mughal Empire. It is because of the above attributes that the White Huns state is considered to be among one of the greatest sixteen Turkish states.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: The Varaha Temple where Toramana's inscription is located



Source: https://kevinstandagephotography.wordpress.com/2018/03/10/eran-varaha-madhya-pradesh/

Appendix 2: The front part of the Varaha Temple where Toramana's inscription is located



Source: https://kevinstandagephotography.wordpress.com/2018/03/10/eran-varaha-madhya-pradesh/

Appendix 3: Front view of the section of the Varaha Temple where the inscription of Toramana is located



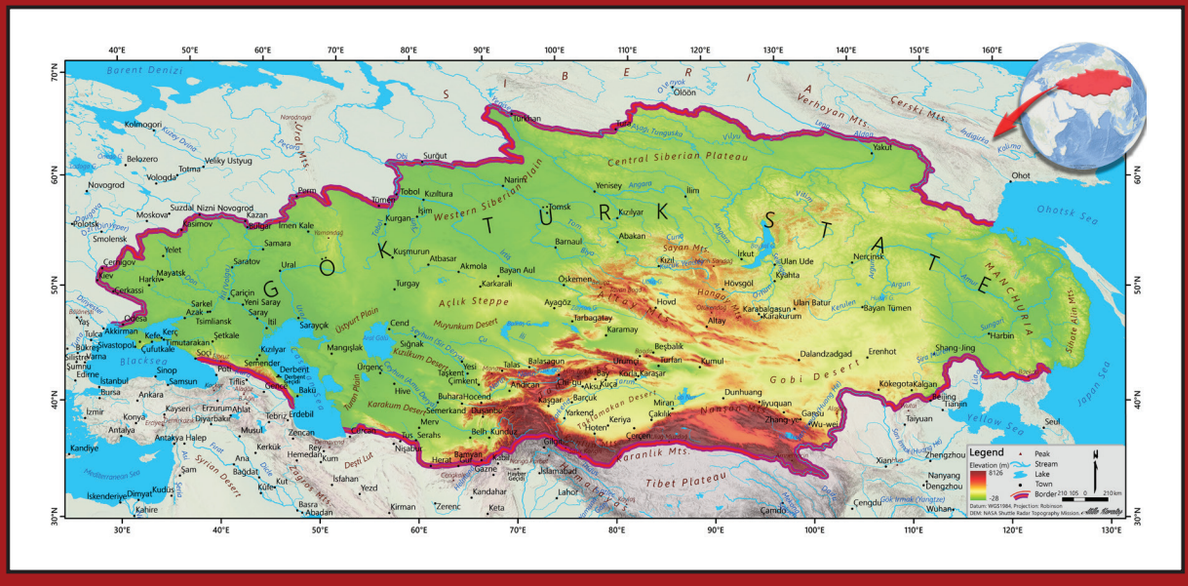
Source: https://kevinstandagephotography.wordpress.com/2018/03/10/eran-varaha-madhya-pradesh/

Appendix 4: The inscription of Toramana located on the Varaha Temple



Source: Müslüme Melis Savaş, *Gupta Tarihi ve Kültürü*, TTK Yayınları, Ankara 2024, s.61.

The Gökturk State



Source: Atilla Karataş Collection



THE GÖKTURK STATE

(552-745)

Ahmet TAŞAĞIL*

The origins of the Turkish people can be traced from the very dawn of written history and by the middle of the sixth century, they succeeded in creating a polity which bore their name. Officially it was called the Türk Khaganate, but in Turkish historiography, it is usually referred to as the Gökturk State. All present Turkic nations have direct or indirect bloodlines from these Gökturks. From social, cultural, legal to political aspects, the era of Gökturk lays down a fundamental model for the whole Turkic world. The erecting of inscriptions in the Turkic language leaves behind an unprecedented treasure that can give great value about how Turkish language came into being at its roots. Most importantly this period also saw and recorded for the first time "Turk" both as a nationality and a state designation. Knowing the past of the Gökturks is key for understanding both the old and modern aspects of the Turkic world. Successor states that came up after the fall of the Gökturks kept showing the cultural and structural marks of this base civilization.

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Origins of the Gökturks

The origin of the Gökturks is often a topic in history mixed with elements of myth, which makes it hard to come to clear conclusions. However, it is known

that before 542, they lived on the south side of the Altai Mountains and originated from the northern region of the Huns.[1] The basin where the Yenisei River originates is thought to the earliest homeland of the Gökturks.[2]

At the time when the Gökturks first stepped onto the stage of world history, the Juan-Juan were still lords over Mongolian territory. In China, the political scene had been divided into two states—Eastern Wei (Ch'i) and Western Wei (Chou)—since 534. The Hephthalites (Akhuns) were in control of Western Turkestan; they had founded a state around Transoxiana and Samarkand and were exercising dominance up to Iran and Afghanistan. At that same period, the Sasanian Empire was ruling over Iran. The Gökturks entered the stage of history in 542.[3] That year saw the realization of the fact that the Gökturks had acquired ample strength to make invasions into the lands of China. Soon after, they started participating in the silk business within northern Chinese markets. Quite aware of Bumin's growing power, therefore, the Gökturks took a great step towards their independence by initiating formal diplomatic relations. In 545, a Sogdian well-acquainted with all there was to know about Turks was sent as an envoy to the Gökturks by the Prime Minister of Western Wei in China.[4] An envoy was sent to the Gökturks in 545.[5] The Gökturks, delighted by the fact that an envoy had been sent to them for the first time, welcomed the event with great enthusiasm. In the following year (546), Bumin bequethed goods native to his own land to the Western Wei state.[6]

The First Gökturk State

Despite these developments, the Gökturks still remained subordinate to the Juan-Juan. During this period, the Töles tribes had also begun to mobilize and were preparing to launch an attack against the Juan-Juan. However, Bumin acted first, launching an offensive against the Töles, defeating them, and bringing them

1 Chou Shu周書, 19, line 454.

2 Chou Shu周書 50, line 909; Pei Shih 北史 99, line 3285; T'ung Tien通典197, 1067 c; Ts'e-fu Yüan-kuei册府元龜 958, 23a; T'ung Chih通志 636, 1c; Wen-hsien T'ung-k'ao 文獻通考 343, 2687 a; Hsin T'ang Shu新唐書(Ou Yang-hsiou/ 1060) (Ting-wen shu-chü Printed Edition, Tai-pei 1985); HTS 215 A, line 6028.

3 CS 27, line 454.

4 Chiou-Ch'üan'li An-nuo-p'an-t'uo'yu

5 CS 50, line 908; Tsu-chih T'ung-chien資治通鑑 159, line4926; ayrıca line1643.

6 CS 50 line 908.



under his authority.[7] As Bumin's influence expanded, he dispatched a messenger to A-na-kuei, the leader of the Juan-Juan state to which he was technically subordinate, conveying his intention to wed A-na-kuei's daughter. With this marriage proposal, Bumin sought to establish that he had attained equal standing. In reply, A-na-kuei disdainfully remarked, "You are a servant labouring in my iron workshops—how dare you propose such a thing?" Insulted by this response, Bumin executed A-na-kuei's messenger and cut off all relations with the Juan-Juan.[8] Bumin sent an envoy and subsequently married the daughter of the Western Wei dynasty with which he had previously formed diplomatic relations.[9]

In the spring of 552, Bumin launched a surprise attack on the Juan-Juan, resulting in a crushing defeat. After this momentous victory, he took the title İl Kağan and declared the Gökturk state's independence in the same year. His wife was also given the title of Hatun[10], indicating the establishment of sovereign authority and the rise of the Gökturks as a prominent political force in Central Asia. Bumin did not live to see the fruits of his labour as he died shortly after gaining independence for his people.[11] Kara Kağan (İlci) upheld the political path forged by his father. He triumphed over a surviving faction of the Juan-Juan in what is now Jehol province in Ordos. Following this victory, he sent an emissary to the Western Wei state, offering a gift of fifty thousand horses in May 553. Kara died later that same year.[12]

With the ascension of Bumin's brother, Mukan, to the Gökturk throne, the state began to quickly rise. This swift ascent can be ascribed to Mukan's intelligence, strategic acumen, and his effective leadership of the army. Mukan pursued the campaign against the remnants of the Gökturks' long-standing enemies, the Juan-Juan. Ultimately, after suffering a third major defeat, the surviving Juan-Juan fled and sought refuge in the Northern Ch'i state. The Gökturks pursued them to the border of this state and eventually agreed to allow them to remain in China in exchange for a favourable trade pact.[13]

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7 CS 50, ibid; TFYK 978, 16 a.

8 CS 50, line 908; TFYK 978 978 16 a.

9 CS 50, line 908.

10 CS 50, s.909, TCTC 164, s.5077; TFYK 995,96; WHTK 343, 2687a.

11 CS 50, line909; TT 197, 1068 a; TC TC 965 ibid.

12 TCTC 165, ibid.; CS 50 ibid.

13 CS 33, line371.



THE GÖKTURKS

The Gökturk state continued to rise and the two North Chinese states the Zhou and Ch'I, began to compete with each other to gain the favour of the Göktürks.[14] Despite the fact that Mukan preferred to align with Western Wei (Chou), a long-standing ally of his state, he continued to maintain diplomatic relations with Northern Ch'i as well. In 555, he was victorious in completely eliminating the Gökturks' traditional enemies, the Juan-Juan.[15]

Observing that the Gökturks had firmly established themselves as a state, the Emperor of Northern Ch'i decided to take defensive measures against them, despite the fact that the two sides had signed a peace treaty. He assigned 1.8 million people to repair the Great Wall of China,

which is approximately 510 kilometers long, and to build new defenses.[16] The year 555 can be categorised a year of conquests for the Gökturks in every sense of the term. They sieged the Khitans and brought them under their control.[17] The Kyrgyz tribes situated to the north and west of Lake Baikal submitted to Mukan.[18] Meanwhile, İstemi Yabgu won a victory against, and brought about the downfall of the Hephthalite (Akhun, Ye-ta) state in Western Turkestan and Northern Afghanistan."[19] In the East, the K'u-mo-his[20] and the Shih-wei tribes also subjugated to the Gökturks. Despite several incursions being carried out into the territories of the Western Wei Dynasty, their diplomatic stance was to by send envoys and to propose a marriage alliance with a Gök Turk princess.[21] and the Shih-wei tribes also subjugated to the Gökturks. Despite several incursions being carried out into the territories of the Western Wei Dynasty, their diplomatic stance was to by send envoys and to propose a marriage alliance with a Gök Turk princess. In the end, peace was concluded in exchange for one hundred thousand bolts of silk.Doğudaki

14 A comprehensive account of these events is recorded in PS 98, lines 3266-3267.

15 Pei Ch'i Shu北齊書 4, line60.

16 PS 94, line 3128.

17 CS 50, line 909.

18 TCTC 166, line 5140.

19 PS 94, line 3127.

20 PS 94, line 3129.

21 SS 46, line 1256.



K'u-mo-his.[22] The T'u-yü-hun who lived to the northeast of Tibet also did not escape the wrath of Mukan'ın 558).[23]

The Zhou Dynasty attempted to foster stronger ties with the Gökturks by bequeathing gifts, while the Northern Ch'i Dynasty persisted in implementing defensive measures, mainly by mending the Great Wall and establishing new garrisons.[24] The fact that the Gökturk envoy occupied the front row at ceremonies carried out at the Zhou palace, illustrates the prestige attributed to the Gökturk state at the time (560 AD). Again, the following year Mukan dispatched three separate delegations to bear gifts to the Chou emperor Ming.[25]

In 563 AD when tensions rose between the Northern Chinese states, it was the Gökturks who played mediator. Mukan sided with the Zhou dynasty and as a result advanced militarily in China. Subsequently, in 568 AD, he gave the hand of his daughter A-shih-na in marriage. The Gökturks benefitted tremendously financially, as they received tribute in the form of gifts from both states.[26]

Having reached a peak economically and having progressed his realm to the desired level of prosperity, Mukan further dispatched approximately one thousand Gökturk warriors to the Zhou capital in accordance with the prerequisites of a formal pact. A luxurious lifestyle was presented to these men in the Chinese metropolis and this garrison functioned as a de facto Gökturk military contingent within the imperial city. Another clear indication of Mukan's influence over the Zhou court was the annual tribute of one hundred thousand bolts of silk, delivered directly to his dominions. Mukan was clearly successful in establishing his polity as the leading power of Central Asia in his time, but he fell ill in 572 AD and subsequently passed away.

Among the early sovereigns of the Turkic states, Mukan Khagan stands out as the most extensively documented figure in available historical sources. He is particularly noted for his intellect, extensive knowledge, and austere demeanour, with his strictness in military matters often highlighted in accounts of his leadership.

22 SS 46, line 1256.

23 CS 28, line 468.

24 PCS 4, line 64; CS 4, line 56; TFYK 961, 15a, b.

25 Ecsedy, "Trade and War Relatiıons Between Turks and China", *Acta Orientalia*, XXI (1968), p.151-152.

26 CS 50, line 89; 33, line 5522; TCTC 169, line 5236; PS 99 ibid.; CS 33, line 571; PCS 7, line 92; CS 19, line 318; PCS 17, line 227; TCTC 169, 5237; PCS 40, p.532.

Contemporary descriptions indicate that his visage was remarkable, measuring over thirty centimetres in width, with his eyes described as possessing a glassy, grey hue, and his complexion notably ruddy. Mukan was not only distinguished by his remarkable bravery but also by his deep understanding of military strategy. As a result, he was regarded with significant concern by neighbouring states.

By managing to bring both the principalities of Northern China into his sphere of influence, Mukan succeeded in gaining the loyalty of nearly all Central Asian tribes and polities. During his reign, the historic Silk Road achieved a period of stability, facilitating sturdy relations between the Far East and the Middle East.[27] All of the Töles tribes, a collective designation for various Turkic clans extending from the River Kerulen to the Ural Mountains, submitted themselves to Mukan's authority in unified loyalty.

In accordance with Mukan's will, succession did not pass to his son Ta-lo-pien, but rather to his brother Taspar (T'a-po). Upon ascending to the throne of this formidable state, the earliest account concerning Taspar in the sources describes him as "he who was trouble for China."[28] Taspar Khagan, just like his elder sibling Mukan, cleverly capitalized on his elevated status. With the belief that he had fully subordinated his southern neighbours, he is alleged to have said to a crowd: "Why do my two loyal sons in the south quarrel needlessly?" This statement not only illustrates his authoritative stance but also suggests his perception of the competing Chinese states as both subordinate and akin to a fraternal relationship[29]

Taspar Khan opted for a re-organisation of the growing Gökturk state. He assigned his elder brother Kara's son She-tu to the East of the state, and Börü the son of his brother Ju-tan to the Western territories as a 'minor ruler.' Thus, Taspar Khagan was elevated to the status of the King of Kings. His uncle Istemi Yabgu located in the Tian Shan mountains had ruled West Turkestan since the foundation of the state in 552.

Taspar Khan made a change to his foreign policy and chose to be allies with the Ch'i thus distancing himself from the Zhou dynasty. However, the Khagan's conversion to Buddhism and the construction of a Buddhist pagoda changed the

[27] TT 197, 1068a; CS 50, line 909; WHTK 343, 1687 b; TFYK 997, 2a; TCTC 165, line 5097.

[28] CS 50, line 911.

[29] CS 50, ibid.; TT 197, 1068 c; WHTK 343, 2687 c; TCTC 171, line 5314.



situation in the country. He had the sacred books of this religion, such as the Nirvana Sutra, translated into Turkish (575).[30]

The Ch'i were unable to withstand the Zhou and their fate was sealed when they were destroyed by the Zhou in the year 577.[31] However, those that had sought refuge with him after fleeing were unjustly handed over to the Chou Kao Chao-i.[32] Taspar whose reign lasted for a decade, fell ill towards the end of 581 and consequently passed away. Before passing away Taspar chose his elder brother's Mukan's son Ta-lo-pien, who was an unsuitable candidate for the throne, to succeed him.[33]

The nation opposed the nobles who desired to see Ta-lo-pien on the throne. The people insisted that Taspar's son An-lo be made Khagan. As a result, An-lo took the throne. However, when An-lo did not gain full support in the country, She-t'u, the son of Kara Khagan, ascended to the throne with the title of Isbara Khagan (581). The full title of the ruler was "Il Külüg Şad Baga Işbara Khagan." However, Ta-lo-pien, who never attained the status of a true Khagan, chose to adopt the title "Apa Khagan" for himself.[34] Ta-lo-pien also sought to assert his own will and independently sent an envoy to China.

The Nation's Western Territories

Bumın Khagan, who gained independence for the Gökturk state, granted the administration of the western parts of the country to his brother Istemi.[35] With the title of "yabgu", Istemi ruled the western wing of the state between 552-576 under the Great Khagan in the east. The wide area extending from the city of Hami in the east of East Turkestan to the Black Sea was under the administration of Istemi

30 TT 197, 1068b; WHTK 343, 2687c.

31 PCS 8, line106,107; TCTC 171, line 5332; CS 51, s.85; TFYK 969, 16a; SS84, line1865; PS 99, line3290; WHTK 343, 2687 c; TFYK 996, 5a A. Von Gabain, "Budhistche Türkenmission", *Asiatica*, (Leipzig 1956), line196.

32 W. Eberhard, *Çin Tarihi*, line 175.

33 TCTC 173, line 5375; PCS 12, line 157; PCS 41, line 548; CS 6, 50, line 912; CS 7, line117, 418; SS 51 line 1329, 174, line 5414; WHTK 343, 2687 c; SS 39, lines1159-1160.

34 SS 84, line1865; PS 99, s.3290; TCTC 175, s.5449; TFYK 967, 8a, b, 9a.

35 Istemi's name is recorded in Chinese sources as Shih-tien-mi and Se-ti-mi only in HTS 215B West Gök.Böl. line6055. In Orkhon Inscriptions, it is mentioned in two places in Kül Tegin east front, line 1 and Bilge Khan east front, line 3. Stembis Khan, Sizabulos, Dizabulos in Byzantine sources: In Islamic sources, names such as Sincibu appear. See also.Gy. Moravcsik, *Byzantino-Turcica*, II, line254, Chavannes, *Documents*, line38.

Yabgu. The southern centre was seven days' journey north from the present city of Karashar (Yen-ch'i).[36] While İstemi Yabgu, his elder brother and his sons were expanding the territories in the East, conquests on a great scale were being undertaken in the Western territories. First of all, the Toles and Ten Ogur tribes that lived scattered across the region beginning from the West of the Altai Mountains and stretching as far as the Caspian Sea[37] were subjugated.

The Gökturks took control of the Silk Road, which connected China and the Mediterranean, after İstemi Yabgu captured the majority of the cities in Western Turkestan that were known to be populated by Sogdians. They consequently became neighbors with the Hephthalites, another Turkic polity (also called the Akhuns). Known as the Akhuns or Hephthalites,[38] this state was repeatedly attacked by Istemi's Gök Turk army in 556, which finally destroyed it to an end in 557. In an attempt to improve his standing, Istemi formed a partnership with Anushirvan, the Sasanian shah, and the hand of his daughter to the Persian king in order to cement their alliance.[39] The Oxus River became the border between the Sassanids and the Gökturks.[40] As a result, Transoxiana, parts of Fergana, Kashgar, Khoten and significant cities of West Turkestan were annexed to the Gök Turk State.

The Sasanian ruler Anushirvan began to pay tribute to to the Western Gökturks. However, the fact that the Sasanians tried to dominate the trade route of Transoxiana damaged relations between the two states. To make matters worse, the envoy sent by Istemi was deviously killed. At this time the territories of Istemi had reached as far as the Caspian Sea.[41] Following the murder of the Göktyuek envoy, Istemi Yabgu began to seek new alliances and sent a delegation led by Soğdlu Maniakh to Byzantine (567). As a result, an alliance was concluded between Byzantium and the Gökturks and Byzantine envoys travelled to the Western Gök Turk

36 TT 199, 1077a; HTS 215B, 6055.

37 SS 84, line1879; PS 99, line3303.

38 B. Ögel, "İlk Töles Boyları", *Belleten,* 48 (1948), pline826-829; W. Samolin, "Hsiung-nu, Hun, Turk,", *CAJ*, III/2 (1956), pline48 and others.

39 CS 50 Ye-ta böl., line 918; See Chavannes, pline242-266; LİNE Aalto, "İranian Contacs of the Turks in Pre, İslamic Times", *Studia Turcica*, (1971), line 33.

40 L. Rasony, *Tarihte Türklük*, Ankara 1988, p.96.

41 Kafesoğlu, *Türk Milli Kültürü*, line 94.



centre in Aktağ.[42] The memoirs of the Byzantine envoy provides valuable information regarding the way of life of the Gökturks.[43]

Due to the successful diplomatic strategies of Istemi, the Byzantine-Sasianian war took place in the year 571. Meanwhile, the Gökturks continued their advance westwards; the Kuban River basin north of the Caucasus and subsequently Azerbaijan fell were captured by the Gökturks.[44] The advance of the Gökturks was halted by the Byzantines not acting in accordance with the pact that was made. The Byzantines breached the pact by receiving the envoy Valentinos, sent by Emperor Tiberius II, near the Aral Sea around the time of Istemi's death in 576. [45] Türk-Şad threatened Byzantine envoys with capturing the fortress of Kerch (Bosporus) in Crimea, even after the mourning ceremonies for Istemi were over. Another episode that prompted Türk-Şad's indignation was the Byzantine eradication of a substantial section of the Sabar Turks in Azerbaijan, which attempted to halt further Turkish conquests in the region. The Byzantine ambassador then visited Tardu's court in the White-Mountain. During this period, one of Türk-Şad's commanders, Bukan took the Byzantine-held Kerch Fortress in Crimea. This marked the farthest western point reached by the Gökturks. Following Istemi's death, his son Tardu came to the throne.

The Eastern Gökturk State

Isbara ascended to the khanate after intense negotiations, and won the hearts of all the tribes because he was known for being courageous. Indeed, the Mongol tribes outside the eastern borders obeyed him too. In return, Isbara showed his goodwill through sending envoys to China.[46]

Meanwhile, a diplomat named Ch'ang Sun-sheng became prominent in Gökturk-China relations. In fact, Ch'ang Sun-sheng accompanied the delegation in 580 as part of Princess Ch'ien-chin's wedding procession. Ch'ang Sun-sheng was

42 Chavannes, line 234; Grignaschi, line 235.

43 Chavannes, lines 233-238.

44 H.W. Haussig, "Theophyloktas Excurs Über die Skytischen Völker", *Byzantion*, XIII (1954), line 375 etc.

45 Ligeti, *Bilinmeyen İç Asya*, Ankara 1972, pline70-71,73; Kafesoğlu, 96, 97; Grousset, line97; Chavannes, line 226 etc.

46 SS 1, line 15; SS 84, line1882.

a good marksman, so Isbara had him accompany him on his hunting trips. Isbara admired Ch'ang Sun-sheng and they became good friends. He even ordered that his marksmanship technique should be taught to his own men. The rapprochement of the Chinese envoy with the notables of the Gökturk State, especially Isbara, would lead to a complete disaster in the future.

Due to the fact that Ch'ang Sun-sheng was closely acquainted with the state elders, he gleaned all types of information about their statecraft. For example, one of the things he learnt was that Isbara was resentful of his brother Ch'u-lo-hou because he was truly loved and admired by the people. In addition, the Chinese envoy found out information regarding the mountains, streams, hunts, number of tribes and the military logistics of the Gökturk country. Upon returning to his country, he immediately prepared a report for the Emperor based on what he had observed and the knowledge he had acquired.[47] The Emperor was very impressed by the contents of the report, and immediately summoned him to the palace to receive him personally. Ch'ang Sun-sheng knew the Gokturks so well that it was as if he had them in the palm of his hand. As a result, the Emperor made a plan to use the detailed intricate details about the Gokturks against them.

The essence of the division strategy prepared by Ch'ang Sun-sheng was based on provoking others against Isbara Khan based on the following:

1. A revolt against Khan Isbara was to be instigated.
2. Contact was to be made with Tardu. Ch'u-lo-hou, the brother of the Khagan was also to be roped into the conspiracy against the khan
3. Ta-lo-pien (Apa, A-p'o) had lost the chance to become Khagan so could be considered one of the biggest enemies of the khan. In the words of the envoy, "he was almost gnawing the state."

Consequently, Wen sent an envoy named Yüan Huei with a wolf-headed banner to Tardu, the ruler of the Western Göktürks in the Chinese Emperor Hami city.[48] As soon as Tardu received the banner he declared independence.[49]

Ch'ang Sun-sheng secretly travelled to the tribes of Hsi, K'u-mo-hsi, Kytans (Ch'i-tan's) in the eastern part of the Gökturk State, presented them with gifts and

[47] SS 51, lines 1330-1331; TCTC 175, lines 5450-5451.

[48] SS 51, line 1331; TCTC 175, line 5451.

[49] SS 84, line 1865.



encouraged them to revolt against Isbara Khan. Ch'u-lo-hou, the khagan's brother, was chosen as the third pillar of the strategy. A spy was secretly sent to him and he was offered to be loyal to the Suei Emperor.[50]

Despite this, Isbara did not immediately lose control. When the Chou dynasty collapsed in China, under the influence of his own wife, the Princess Ch'ien-chin, he launched a major attack against the newly established Suei dynasty, which united all of China 350 years later (582). Despite their opposition, the forces of Tardu, T'an-han, Ch'u-lo-hou and Apa joined the army under Isbara's command. He organised successful campaigns as far as T'ien-shuei in the Chinese interior. Chinese commanders did not dare to fight with the Gökturk army and fled back under various pretexts.[51] Meanwhile, Tardu betrayed and retreated with his troops.[52] Intoxicated by their success, the Gökturks were blindsided and defeated.[53] Meanwhile, the Göktürks faced disasters of famine and epidemic disease (584). Many of the soldiers died. After Tardu, Apa also rebelled against Isbara Khan. Although there were battles between the rebels and Isbara, Isbara was not defeated. When Tan-han and Ti-chin-ch'a also rebelled, Isbara fell into even more difficult situation. Although the opponents asked for help from China, the Chinese took the side of Isbara and made him recognise their political superiority (585).[54] The spy Ch'ang Sun-sheng had achieved his goal.[55]

With the accession of T'an-han and Ti-chin-ch'a, Apa Khan's power grew like an avalanche. His borders, which extended to Ötüken, exceeded the Altai Mountains in the west, and the Sogdians of Kuca, Hami and the western countries and the Töles tribes were attached to him. Their rapid strengthening attracted the attention of China. In 585, Tardu also attacked and defeated Isbara. However, Emperor Wen of the Suei dynasty in China decided to help Isbara who was in a difficult situation. With his help, Isbara defeated Apa Khan and his allies, consolidated

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50 CS 51, lines1330-1331; TCTC 175 ibid.

51 TCTC 175, line 5462; TT 197, 1068c; WHTK 343, 2688a; SS 84, pline1866-1867; PS 99, lines 3291-3292; SS 40, line 1174; SS 53, line 1350.

52 TCTC 175, s.5459; SS 51, s.1331.

53 SS 84, S.1868; PS 99, s.3292; TCTC 175, a.y.; SS 54, 1224.

54 SS 84, 1868; PS 99, line 3193; TCTC 175, line5465; TCTC 176 ibid; TFYK 978, 17 a-b. S.Jachid, "Trade, Peace and War Between The Nomadic Altaic and Agricultural Chinese", *Pien cheng,* 1 (1970), line 75.

55 SS 51, line1332; TCTC 175, line 5466; SS 84, 1868; PS 99, line 3293; TFYK 978, 17a-b; SS 40, line 1174; TCTC 176, line 5482.

his position and regained all the former lost territories.[56] In May 587, while resting in the Chinese garrison of Tsu-ho after a hunt in which he shot a large number of deer in the northern Chinese provinces of Heng and Tai, he fell ill and died. On his death, the Suei Emperor declared three days of mourning, offered five thousand balls of silk and sacrificed at his burial.[57]

Before his death, Isbara willed his brother Ch'u-lo-hou, who had been serving as a yabguluk, to the throne instead of his son. In doing so, he cited his own son Yung-yü-lü's weak and timid personality as the reason. When Ch'u-lo-hou ascended the throne with the title of Baga Khan, his nephew did not object. However, he rose to the important position of yabguluk. The new Khan captured the main opponent Apa Khan, but the Chinese prevented him from being killed.

Baga Khagan was shot in the forehead and killed in 589 when he went on an expedition in the western direction to a country whose name is not mentioned in the sources.[58] The physical appearance of Baga (Ch'u-lo-hou) Khagan, whose clever and brave personality is emphasised in the sources, is recorded as long-cheeked, hunched back and light-coloured face in a different way from other Khagans.[59]

Upon his sudden death, the statesmen elected Isbara's son Yung-yü-lü with the title of Tou-lan as Khagan. In the first years of his khaganate, Tou-lan sent an annual tax to China but he later stopped paying.

In the meantime, an important event occurred in China in 589, and China was politically united under the Suei dynasty after 360 years. He protected the opponents of this dynasty who took refuge in him.[60] Nevertheless, the spy Ch'ang Sun-sheng was sent to the Gök Turk country and the dissidents were eliminated.

The strengthening of the Eastern Gökturk State led to the resumption of Chinese intrigues. Although the Chinese first supported the khagan's brother Ch'in-yü Shad, Tou-lan marched on him and killed him. Most of the tribes of the Khaganate had established relations by sending thousands of animals such as horses, camels, sheep and cattle to China. When Jan-kan, the nephew of the Khagan, secretly sent

56 SS 84 line1875; PS 3299-3300; TCTC 176, line 5482; TFYK 970, 2b.

57 SS 84 ibid.; PS 99, ibid.

58 TCTC 176, s.5490-5498; SS 84, 1870; SS 51, s.1332; TT 197 1068 c; PS 99, s.3295.

59 TFYK 997, 2a; SS 84, ibid.; PS 99 ibid.

60 TCTC 178, line 5542; SS 84, line1871; PS 99, line 3295-3296; SS 51, line 1332.



news to China from the vicinity of Lake Baikal where he lived and established relations, the state was again drifting into disaster (593).[61]

Suei Emperor married Jan-kan to a Chinese princess and gave him the title of T'u-li Khan. The Chinese were trying to wear down Tou-lan Khagan with intrigues. In the meantime, Tardu and Tou-lan, who left the eastern part of the state in 582 and declared the Western Gök Turk State, clashed many times, but they could not get any result. Then peace was established between them.[62]

War broke out between T'u-li Khan (Jan-kan), who rebelled with the support of China, and Tou-lan (597). T'u-li, who was not successful, fled and took refuge in Suei dynasty. After that, long-lasting Tou-lan-China wars started. Tou-lan Khan, who won all the battles in the battlefields, could not prevent the spying and intrigue activities of the Chinese. In particular, the rebellion of the tribes called Töles, which constituted the entire population of the country, against the Chinese provocations shook the state to its foundations and he lost his life in one of these rebellions. Tardu, the Western Gökturk Khan, supported the Eastern Gökturk State against China. When Tou-lan disappeared, he declared himself as the khan of the Eastern Gökturk state with the title of Bilge. Tardu, who defeated the great armies sent against him, was defeated by the famous spy diplomat with a very simple trick. Tardu had fought long field battles with the Chinese armies and inflicted heavy losses. Ch'ang Sun-sheng, who realised that he could no longer win victory on the battlefields, caused a great massacre by secretly pouring poison into the springs where the Gökturk army and their flocks would drink water. Tardu, who lost many of his troops and herds, but still did not give up. However, the rebellion of the Töles tribes led to a complete loss of control. In 603, he took refuge with the T'u-yü-huns in the north-east of Tibet and withdrew from the stage of history.[63]

In order to occupy the vacant Eastern Gök Turk throne, the Suei dynasty sent T'u-li, who had taken refuge with them and was proclaimed Khagan there, to the Gök Turk country under the title of Ch'i-min'i Khagan. Under the title of Ch'i-min, he ruled under the Chinese Emperor until 609. He fought against the Koreans

61 TCTC 178, line 5543; SS 84, 1872; PS 99, ibid.; TT 197, 1069a, WHTK 343, 2688 b.

62 SS 84, ibid.; PS 99 ibid.; TCTC 178, line 5543; SS 51, line 1333.

63 TC TC 178, line 5558, 5563, 5564, 5584; SS 84, line 1872; PS 99 line3 296; SS 74, line 1697 TT 197, 1067 a; WHTK 343, 2688b; TFYK 978, 18a,b, 19a,b; SS 48a; SS 51, ibid.

on their behalf and showed the degree of his obedience by grovelling at the feet of Emperor Yang of Suei who came to visit him. He died in 609 from illness.[64]

Ch'i-min's son Shih-pi, who succeeded him, was nothing like his father. He married his widowed stepmother, Princess I-ch'eng of Chinese origin. Shih-pi Khan cut the annual tax sent to China and declared that he did not recognise his superiority. The Chinese immediately started to intrigue. Their offer to Ch'i-chi, the brother of Khagan, to be the khan of the south side was rejected. Ch'i-chi Shad had not betrayed his brother like the others. This time the Chinese took over the Sogdians living in the Gökturk country. They lured them into Chinese borders with the promise of trade and killed them (615). Shih-pi Khan, who was angry that his brother was offered the khaganate and then the Sogdians, with whom they had good relations, were deceived and killed by deception, rushed into the Chinese territory and besieged Emperor Yang, who was on an inspection towards the northern provinces, in Yen-men Castle. Despite all appeals to the Emperor, who was in a difficult situation, no help came from any of the other provinces. Emperor Yang began to cry out of fear. Of the 41 bastions in the fortress-city of Yen-men, 39 fell into the hands of the Sky Turks. However, I-ch'eng, the Chinese wife of the Khan, deceived him by saying that there was a rebellion. When the siege was lifted, the Emperor saved himself but could not prevent the disintegration of his state. When the Suei dynasty collapsed, the T'ang dynasty was founded (617-905). After his brilliant victories, Shih-pi Khan's fame and power had increased. As he made raids to China every year, he also imposed an annual tax. Shih-pi Khan started a great raid against China in February 619. After crossing the Yellow River without encountering any resistance, he died while he was about to attack the city of T'ai-yüan.[65] Upon Shih-pi's sudden death, his younger son Ilteber Shad succeeded to the Eastern Gökturk throne under the title of Ch'u-lo Khan. In 620, Ch'u-lo Khan prepared for a great raid against the T'ang dynasty. According to the plan, the Gökturk army was to attack from four major columns. T'ang Emperor Kao-tsu was very scared and sent an envoy named Cheng Yüan-shou to dissuade the

[64] SS 51, line1335; TCTC 179, line5600; TCTC 180, pline5621, 22, 5632 SS 65; TCTC 181, pline5641-5643; TT 197, 1069b; WHTK 343, 2688 b; TFYK 980 4b,5 a. 69 SS 84, line 1876; PS 99, line 3299.

[65] SS 84, line 1876; PS 99, line 3299; TCTC 182, line 5567-5568; SS 4, line8; SS 67, line1582; TFYK 998, 6b, HTS 1, line 2; TCTC 183, line 5718, 5724, 5740, 5742, 5749; Chiou T'ang Shu舊唐書 56, s.2280; HTS 87, line 3731; CTS 194 A, 5153; HTS 215 A, line 6028; TFYK 974, 10 a.



Khan from the attack. The said envoy could not convince Ch'u-lo Khan. However, he poisoned the Khagann through the men he had with him. Ch'u-lo, who imprisoned those who had poisoned him, died after a short while later (621).[66]

Ch'u-lo was succeeded by Bagatur Shad "Il Khagan." Il Qaghan, who became the head of a militarily very strong state, was very successful in the first years of his reign. From 621 onwards, he made raids extending as far as the Chinese capital Ch'ang-an and obtained large quantities of silk for his country. All the cities in the north of China were besieged. However, the envoy named Cheng Yüan-shou, who appeared before the Qaghan, managed to convince Il Qaghan by telling him that even if he conquered all of China, he would not be able to hold it, and if he made peace with the T'ang dynasty, his gains would not go to the nation, but would remain only in the treasury of the Qaghan, and the Qaghan gathered his army and returned (622).[67]

The peace pact was broken by the Chinese and they attacked the Gökturks which resulted in the Turkish armies turning their sights towards China again. The raids that started in 623 continued uninterruptedly until 625. When his nephew T'u-li, who carried the title of "Little Khagan", secretly made a friendship agreement with China, Il Khagan's morale deteriorated. He concluded a peace treaty with the T'ang Emperor on the banks of the Wei River in 626 and ended his campaigns. However, until this time, none of the large Chinese armies had been able to gain superiority over the Göktürks. Therefore, in vain, the military and political pressure of the Sky Turks on China came to an end.[68]

Despite his great power, Il Qaghan made important mistakes. Gök Turk customs and laws were corrupted by Chinese and Sogdian viziers who were appointed to high positions. As a result, the people lost confidence in their khagan and state. In addition, there was a severe winter in 627 and famine broke out because most of the animals died. Il Khan, who wanted to get rid of the economic distress by increasing taxes, faced a great rebellion and lost most of his tribes. These tribes were

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66 TCTC 187, line 5848; CTS 54, line 2239; HTS 85, line 3700; CTS 194 A, ibid.; HTS 215 A, line 6028; CTS 62, line 2380; HTS 100, line 3938.

67 CTS 60, line 3245; HTS 78, line3520; TCTC 189, line 5920, 5911, 5912 T 5940; CTS 194 A ibid.; HTS 215 A, s.6030; CTS 55, line 2217; HTS 86, line 3714.

68 TCTC 190, line 5973-5975; TCTC 191 5980-5995; HTS 215 A, 6032; CTS 194 A, 5157; TFYK 998, 7a; TFYK 985, 2b; CTS 67, line 2478; TT 197, 1070 a; TCTC 192, line 6021. 73 TCTC 192, line 6037; CTS 194 A, line 5158; HTS 215 A, line 6033.

led by the Sir Tardus. With the support they received from China, they declared their own khaganate in 627. From now on, the Chinese were closely watching the Göktürks and were expecting them to collapse at any moment.[69]

Il Khan moved southwards due to the famine and cold and went hunting in the mountains north of China. As a result, he was ambushed by the Chinese in 630 and lost the last of his troops. Afterwards, he was captured and taken to China (630). The Eastern Gökturk state thus disappeared and Il Khagan died of grief in 634.[70]

Western Gökturk State

When the Chinese sent a wolf-headed banner to Tardu in 582 and announced that they recognised his independence, the Western Gökturk State emerged.

Tardu was very successful in his relations with the western world. Having captured the Byzantine fortress of Kerch (Bosforos) in Crimea in 576, the Western Sky Turk armies appeared in front of the fortress of Kersonesos five years later. Another army besieged Derbend in the Caucasus.[71] Almost all the kingdoms of the Sogdians inhabiting West Turkestan came under Tardu's rule. In 591, Kaoch'ang (Turfan) Kingdom, the most famous and powerful city state of East Turkestan, was also captured. The King of Samarkand married Tardu's daughter and the country of Kashgar was taxed. In 588-89, attacks were made on Sassanids, Bactria and Toharistan were occupied and Herat was reached. Even the vicinity of Bagdis had fallen into the hands of the Turks.[72]

At this time, Hormuz, nicknamed Turkzade, born to Anushirvan's daughter Fakim, daughter of Istemi Yabgu, was ruling on the throne of the Sassanid Empire in Iran. Since he resembled the Turks in physical appearance, he became famous with the nickname of the son of Turk (Turkzade).[73] During the reign of Hosrev Perviz, the son of Hormuz, it is observed that the West Sky Turk soldiers were involved in the internal struggles of the Sassanids. Especially in the wars between Perviz and Behram Chupin, the Turkish soldiers played a great role and ensured

[69] TCTC 192, line 6037; CTS 194 A, line 5158; HTS 215 A, line 6033.

[70] TCTC 193, pline6066-6067-6072-6075; CTS 67, line 2485; HTS 93, line3818; CTS 58, line2307; HTS 89, line3760; TT 197, 1070b.

[71] R. Grousset, line 97; Chavannes, line 233-252; Kafesoğlu, line 103.

[72] SS 83, line 1848, 1853, 1854.

[73] Chavannes, line 242 ; Grousset, ibid.; Kafesoğlu, ibid.



the victory of Behram Chupin. In the battles by the Nehravan River, they took the side of Behram Chupin against Perviz.[74]

Countries such as Toharistan, Kunduz and Balkh were also conquered by the Western Göktürks, and a tegin son of Tardu was sent to this region as an administrator.[75] Tardu, who truimphed, interfered in the internal affairs of the Eastern Gökturk State after 599 but he ultimately failed and disappeared (603).

Then his grandson Ch'u-lo took the throne of the Western Gökturks. Meanwhile, Ni-li Khagan, a descendant of Apa Khagan, was also keen on taking the throne. However, they took refuge in China in 600. In 603, Tardu took refuge with the T'u-yü-huns and Ni-li's son Ta-man Tegin had to flee to China when his nation opposed the war that Ch'u-lo Khan wanted to wage unjustly (612). Tardu's grandson (Tu-lu's son) She-kuei declared his Khaganate in the Western Gökturk region, which he ruled with the rank of shad. When Ch'u-lo took refuge in China, he was left alone.[76] After that, She-kuei appeared at the head of the Western Sky Turks. He succeeded in uniting the scattered tribes and extending the borders to the Altai Mountains.[77] In a short time, he gathered the scattered tribes together. When She-kui died soon after, his younger brother T'ung Yabgu became the Khagan. The first activity of T'ung Yabgu Khan, who was reported to be brave, intelligent, tactical, and especially excellent in warfare, was to bind his tribes to himself. The khagan had emerged as a great rival against Iran. He took under his rule all the way to Kashmir in the south. He moved his capital to Binpinar. He completely subjugated West Turkestan. The marriage alliance he wanted to make with China could not be realised due to the threat of Il Khan (622).[78] Meanwhile, the rebellion of the Karluks disturbed his peace.[79] T'ung Yabgu was eliminated as he was killed by his uncle Bagatur in 630 as the unrest in his country was increasing. In the west, T'ung Yabgu defeated the Sassanids in 619 and captured the cit-

74 Şeşen, olinecit., line11.

75 Chavannes, p.245 et.al.; Şeşen, line 12; Kafesoğlu, line 103.

76 SS 84, line1876, 1880, PS 99, line3302, 3303; TT 199, 1077 a,b; TFYK 958, 23; TCTC 180, line5622; TCTC 181, line 5636; TFYK 990, 18a.

77 HTS 215B West Gök. böl., line 6056.; TT 199, 1077b.

78 CTS 194 West Gök. böl., line5181; HTS 215B Batı Gök. böl., s.6057; Also see Liu İ-t'ang, "Hsin T'ang Shu T'u-chüe K'ao-chu", *Pien-cheng*, 14 (1983), line177.

79 See 538 and 541 above and also Chavannes, line 340; Kafesoğlu, *Türk Milli Kültürü*, line104, 105; H. Salman, "VII ve XI.Asırlar Arasında Önemli Türk Boylarından Karluklar ve Karluk Devleti", *Türk Dünyası Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 15 (1981), line 170.

ies of Rey and Isfahan.[80] He sent his son with the title of Shad to Bab-as-sulu.[81] In 623, the Byzantine Emperor Heraclius, the Khazars and the Western Sky Turks inflicted another heavy defeat on the Sassanid armies.[82] The famous Buddhist monk Hsüan-tsang visited T'ung Yabgu in late 629-early 630.[83]

The Interregnum period

The loss of independence of the Gökturks was described in the Gök Turkish inscriptions, Kül Tegin and Bilge Kağan monuments and expressed for the nation to take a lesson. Among the reasons for the collapse of the Gökturk state, three important reasons are emphasised.[84] The first reason for the collapse of the state was weak leadership. Secondly, it was the lack of responsibility of the nation towards the state, and thirdly, it was the constant intrigue and cunning policies of the Chinese.[85]

While it was explained that the nation did not fulfil its duties towards the state, it was explained that the state was weakened because the beys and the nation were not obedient but rebellious.[86] As for the Chinese intrigues and their cunning policy, it was emphasised that they brought foreign tribes closer to themselves with effective words and silk fabrics, then deceived them and spread the seeds of mischief, pitted younger brother against older brother, nation against khan, and ultimately led to the collapse of the state.[87] It is also stated that God gave death to the Turkish nation because it abandoned its own khagan and attached itself to China.[88]

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80 M. Gringnaschi, line238.

81 Gringnaschi, line241; Togan, line73; Şeşen, line13.

82 Togan, ibid.; Kafesoğlu, ibid.

83 Chavannes, line 24-25, 52-53; Grousset, line105; Ligeti, line87-90; N. Togan, "Central Asia in the age of the Prophet according to Hüen-çang", *İslam Tetkikleri Enstitüsü Dergisi*, IV/1-2 (1964), s.21-64. St. Julien, *Memoires Sur les Contrees Occidentales par Hioen-Tsang*, Paris 1863; S. Beal, *The Life of Hioen-Tsiang*, London 1911.

84 İ. Kafesoğlu, *olinecit*., lines 105-106.

85 Kül Tegin Inscription, East Faces, 4-6; Bilge Khan Inscription, Eastern Front, lines 5, 6. For some Turkish editions of these monuments see H. Namık Orkun, *Eski Türk Yazıtları*, Ankara 1987; T. Tekin, *Orhon Yazıtları*, Ankara 1988; T. Tekin, *Tunyukuk Yazıtı*, Ankara 1994; M. Ergin, *Orhun Abideleri*, Istanbul 1980.

86 Kül Tegin Inscription, Eastern Face, 6; Bilge Khan Inscription, East Front, line 10.

87 Kül Tegin Inscription, Doğu Face, 5-7; Bilge Khan Inscription, North Face, lines 4-6.

88 Tonyukuk Inscription, 3. line.



The headless people were divided into three masses after the capture of Il Khagan. The first mass went to the Sir Tardus, who had been holding the region of Ötüken for the last two-three years, and became their protectorate. I-nan, the chief of Sir Tardus, had contacted with China in 627 and declared his independence with the banner and drum sent to him. The power and influence of the Sir Tardush increased with the joining of some of the Gökturks' who had been captured by Il Khagan.[89] The second group of the Gökturk people travelled towards the cities of Turkestan called the Western Countries. After the establishment of the First Gökturk State, Istemi Yabgu, who started to rule the western wing of the state, bound them all to himself. After 582, his son Tardu, in the independence of the Western Gökturk State, sent a Tegin to the cities of Turkestan to govern them, while at the same time settling the Gökturk people in the cities. Those who broke away from the Eastern Gökturk State settled in the series of cities on the southern slopes of the God Mountains, from Hami to Kashgar, Kuca, Aksu, Karashar and so on. The third mass travelled to China with a hundred thousand people. The accumulation in the north of China worried the T'ang Emperor.[90] There were long discussions in the Chinese palace about the settlement of the Gökturks who came to China. As a result, they were settled in the region extending from You-chou to Ling-chou. Military governorships were established for them.[91] About ten thousand Turks lived in the capital Ch'ang-an. In the spring of 639, one of the Turkic lords who had taken refuge in China from the Gökturks rebelled. T'u-li Khagan's brother Chie-shih-shuai had come to China with his brother in 629.[92]

By secretly liaising with his own descendants, Chie-shih-shuai reached an agreement with more than forty Gökturk tribal lords,[93] If they succeeded, his nephew Ho-lo-hu would be made khagan. Prince Li Chih, who roamed the streets every night, would be kidnapped and the captive Turks would be freed. However, the plan did not work when the prince failed to go out because of the dire weather conditions. Although they raided the palace, they had to retreat upon the arrival of the guards. Since the Wei River was overflowing due to flooding, they could not

89 See below: The discourse on Sir Tarduş.

90 Records related to this incident: TT 197, 1070c; CTS 194A, s.5162; HTS 215A, s.6037; WHTK 343, 2690b.

91 The centre of You-chou was located in the city of Cho in present-day Ho-pei province. Ling-chou is today the city of Ling-wu in Ning-hsia.

92 TCTC 195, line 6147; THY 94, line 1689.

93 TCTC 195, ibid.

cross and they died in battle.[94] As a result of this uprising, the Chinese considered the Turks as a danger and wanted to remove them from their capital by declaring A-shih-na Ssu-mo as khan and sending them to their own homeland, but the Sir Tardush prevented them and they were settled in Sheng province.[95]

The Sir Tardush, who appeared as the most powerful of the Töles tribes from the 600s onwards, declared their independence after 628. When the Eastern Gökturk State collapsed in 630, they remained as the most important power in the region of Ötüken. They successfully defended their own country in the wars that broke out when the Gökturks who went to China wanted to be sent back after 639. However, after the death of their khagan Bilge I-nan (645), their sons fell into dispute and the Sir Tardush's power disintegrated in 646-647.[96]

Another ruler of the Gökturk dynasty, who ruled in the Altai Mountains (638), could not hold on against the Sir Tardush and took refuge in a place surrounded by mountains. After recovering his strength, he left his place and united the Karluks and Kyrgyz to himself. However, the Chinese sent Karluk, Uighur and Bugu tribes against him, captured him and brought him to their capital (650).[97] After that, Turkic tribes such as Bugu (Bugut), T'ung-lo (Tongra), Tu-po, Bayırku, To-lan-ko, Hu-hsie, Ediz (A-tie), Ch'i-pi, Basmıl Kurıkan, Kyrgyz, Hun, Karluk, Uyghur in the Eastern Gökturk country were directly connected to China and the region came under Chinese control.[98] In addition, the Gök Turk remnants in the north of China were divided into large general military governorates. The Western Göktürks fell into confusion after T'ung Yabgu was killed by his uncle. No one recognised his uncle Bagatur as khagan, and as a result, T'ung Yabgu's son Hsi-li soon took the throne. However, when the disturbances continued, they sought assistance from the remotely located T'ang dynasty. Even the Töles tribes revolted. Bagatur was

94 HTS 215A, line6039 and TCTC 195 ibid.; THY 94, 1690; TT ibid.; WHTK 2690b; Liu, I, 151 et.al.; Chang Jen-t'ang, line106108; Liu İ-t'ang, olinecit., line 149.

95 HTS 215 A, line6139; CTS 194 A, pline5164,5165; TT 197, 1071c; CTS 3, line50, 51; WHTK 2690c.

96 CTS 199 B, line 5343-5345; HTS 217 B, line6134; CTS 3, line 43; HTS 2, line41; HTS 215B, pline6137, 6138-6146.

97 TT 198,1073c; CTS 194 A, line 5165; HTS 215A, lines 6040-6041; TFYK 986, 1a; TCTC198, line 6250; WHTK269, 1a.

98 J. Hamilton, "Toguz Oguz et On Uigur", *Jornal Asiatique*, (1962), p.33-54; M, Mori, "On Chi-li-fa (eltaber/eltabir) and Chi-chin (irkin) of the T'ieh-le Tribes", *Acta Asiatica*, (Tokuyo 1965), p.53 etc; TT 198, 1080 c-1081 a; HTS 217 B, lines 6040-6041; WHTK 2699 a; CTS 199A, line 5348.



defeated and fled to the Altai Mountains. The new khagan was defeated by the Sir Tardush and could not subjugate the other Töles tribes. Later, when many dissidents appeared in his country, he fled to Maveraunnehir and took refuge there. Meanwhile, Isbara, the son of Ni-shu Baga Shad from the Western Gökturk dynasty, divided his country into ten tribes. Each chieftain of each tribe was given an arrow. They were organised into five Tuo-lu and five Nu-shih-pi tribes. Tuo-lu's lived to the east of Tokmak and were organised into five tribes. The Nu-shih-pi, who lived to the west of it, were organised into five great erkliks. Thus, all of the new tribes that emerged were called Ten Arrows.[99] But peace could not come. In 638, the Western Gökturk country, which was divided into two, with the Ili River as the border, was not united again. The Chinese were also constantly causing disturbances thanks to their intrigue policies. A-shih-na Ho-lu rebelled in 648 around Talas River and seized all political and military power. He maintained his independence in the Western Gök Turk country for about ten years. When he suppressed many rebellion movements against him, the Chinese sent an army in person.

The majority of this army was composed of other Turkic tribes. Exhausted by constant guerrilla warfare and finally captured, A-shih-na Ho-lu was taken to China and died in 659.[100]

The first revolt among the captive Turks in China broke out in 679. Two leaders, A-shih-te Wen-fu and A-shih-te Feng-chih, persuaded A-shih-na Ni-shu-fu, a member of the Gökturk dynastic family, to become khan, and a war of independence began. Almost all the lords of 24 provinces joined them. The soldiers of the army sent against them could not stand the cold. The Sky Turks smashed this army with a sudden attack and counterattacked. However, they were not victorious and managed to take refuge in Wolf Mountain (Lang-shan) in the east of the Altai Mountains.[101] In 681, the second revolt broke out. It too failed to achieve its goal due to severe famine.[102]

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99 HTS 215B, p.6060-62.

100 CTS 194 B, line 5187; HTS 215B, line 6062-63; HTS 215B, s.6063, 6064; Chavannes, pp.27-41, 57-76.

101 CTS 64, line 2801 etc; HTS 108, line 4086 etc.; CTS 83, line 2784-2785.

102 CTS 194 A, line 5166; HTS 215 A, line 6042; TCTC 202, line 6392; TT 198, 1073b CTS 63, line 2405; HTS 101, line 3952; CTS 64, line 2801 etc.; HTS 108, line 4086 etc. CTS 83, line 2784-2785.

The Second Gökturk State

Kutlug, a descendant of the Eastern Gökturk Khan Il, retreated away from the Chinese borders (Chogay Kuzi). When he plundered the herds of the Nine Oghuzes, his power increased and he declared the independence of the Second Gök Turk State. He organised his state by appointing one of his brothers Beg-Çor as shad and Tuo-hsi-fu as yabgu. He was relieved when Tonyukuk, who escaped from his imprisonment in China and took refuge in the Gökturk State, was appointed Apa Tarkan by Kutlug. Thanks to Tonyukuk's plans and strategies, the state was established on solid foundations.[103]

In the first moments of the Gök Turk State, a fugitive from the Nine Oghuz had arrived and reported the danger. The Nine Oghuz, who had elected a new Khagan, would attack them in alliance with the Qantans and the Chinese. Hearing this news, Tonyukuk took action before the rivals came together. With his army of two thousand men, he succeeded in defeating the Six Thousand Nine Oguz. Ötüken passed into the hands of the Gökturks. Thus, the newly established Gök Turk State was saved from extinction thanks to Tonyukuk's appropriate action.[104] After that, the offensives against China, which would last until 686, began. Captive Turks in North China were rescued by raids.[105] Kutlug fought seventeen times with the Chinese and seven times with the Kistanans.[106] Kutlug fell ill in 691 and died two years later.[107]

His brother Kapgan (692-716), who succeeded Kutlug, continued to develop the state in every aspect. The activities of Kapgan, who served as the Khagan for a very long period of 24 years in the history of the Göktürks, is described in the Orkhon Inscriptions. He was recognised as the Khagan who won the most victories, frightened China the most, took almost all of the Turkic communities living at that time under his rule made his state the most powerful of its time. Kapgan's name, also mentioned as Bögü in the Tonyukuk Inscription, means "conqueror".

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103 CTS 194 A, line 5167; HTS 215 A, line 6043; TT 198, 1073 b; WHTK 343, 1691 c.

104 Tonyukuk Inscription, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17.

105 CTS 77, line 2672; HTS 98, line 3904; CTS 83, line 3295; HTS 210, line 4122; CTS 194 A, line 5167, 5168; HTS 215 A. ibid.; TCTC 204, s.6446; TT 198, ibid.; WHTK, 343 ibid.

106 Tonyukuk Inscription, 49. line; Kül Tegin Inscription, East Face, lines 15-16; Bilge Kağan Inscription, East Face, lines13-14.

107 This information is available at: CTS 194A, s.5167, 5168; HTS 215A, a.y.; TCTC 204, s.6446; TT 198/ibid.; WHTK 343/ ibid.



He won his first victory by defeating Chinese General Li To-tsu in 693. He continued his raids relentlessly. The Chinese army of 18 generals could not even face him. He suppressed the Kultan rebellion on behalf of China for the return of the captive Turks taken to China. The Kyrgyz in the Yenisei region were defeated by Kapgan and Tonyukuk because they intended to co-operate with China. Upon Kapgan's return due to the death of his wife, the armies under the command of Tonyukuk and Bilge defeated the Turgis.

Kapgan's prestige and power increased even more after the suppression of the rebellion of the Kytans with the help of the Gökturk army and the return of the captive Turks in China. Subsequently, he was constantly victorious in Chinese wars and intervened in the internal affairs of the T'ang dynasty. Although he wanted to do agriculture by bringing seed millet and agricultural tools, he was delayed by the Chinese. Thereupon, he declared the Chinese envoy sent to him as the King of China. He defeated the Chinese with the campaigns he organised between 698-703.

Rising to the level of the most powerful ruler of Central Asia in a short time, Kapgan made some administrative changes because the Gökturk country had expanded so much. He appointed his brother Tu-hsi-fu as Left Wing (east) Shad and Bilge, the son of his brother Kutlug, as Right Wing Shad. He also appointed his own son Bögü with the title of "Little Khan" over the shad on both sides. Thus, he himself became the "Great Khan" (699).

While the victories against China, the greatest enemy of the Gök Turk State, continued in the east, campaigns were also launched against the Turgish rebelling in the west. The Gök Turk army under the leadership of Küçük Khagan (Inel, Bögü), Bilge Şad and Tonyukuk crossed the Altai Mountains, reached Cungarya (Yarış Plain) and defeated the Turgish heavily at Bolçu (on the southwestern shore of Lake Urungu).[108] As a result of the Bolchu victory, all the Nu-shih-pi and Tuo-lu tribes of the Turgish, i.e. the Turks of the Balkhash, Ili, Issyk-Kul and Talas regions, again recognised Kapgan's rule.[109] Later, the Gökturk raids reached Maveraunnehir (Kengü Tarban), Otrar city, the vicinity of the Aris River.[110] Meanwhile, Bilge had organised a campaign against Tanguts in 700 and captured their children, women, horses and all their property (BK,D,24).

108 Kül Tegin, East, line 18-19; Bilge, East, line 16; Tonyukuk I, West line 3.

109 Kül Tegin, East line 21; Bilge, East, line 18; Also see E. Chavannes, *Dokuments sur les Tuo-kioue Occidentaux*, Paris 1941, p.283 etc.

110 Kafesoğlu, *Türk Milli Kültürü*, p.111.

At this time, the Gökturk raids in the west were continuing. The city kingdoms in Western Turkestan, which had been ruled by the Turks for about 25 years, were able to resist the Arab attacks reaching there.[111] The western armies of the Göktürks, also led by Tonyukuk, Inel and Bilge, reached the banks of the Seyhun (Yincü Ögüz), crossed the river and plunged into the Kyzylkum Desert of Maveraünnehir. While some forces under the command of Inel Khan remained here, Tonyukuk marched south and conquered the Sogdian people under the Turgish Archbub So-ke.[112] Afterwards, the Gökturk army crossed Ek-Tagh and reached the Iron Gate (701).[113]

After raiding the Lung-you region and capturing more than 10 thousand horses, Kapgan Khan returned to his country.[114] In this campaign against the Chinese army, in which Bilge and Kül Tegin leaders also participated, Kül Tegin captured the Chinese commander Ong Tutuk and presented him to Kapgan (701) (BK, D, 25 KT, D, 31). In the spring of 702, Kapgan raided Yen and Hsia provinces and captured 100 thousand horses and sheep. Raids extended to Tai and Hsin regions.[115] A year later, he stopped the raids and sent Baga Tarkan as an envoy to China and proposed a new marriage alliance. He immediately called the heirs to him and held a meeting in the palace. When Kapgan Khan's proposal was accepted, he presented an envoy and 5 thousand head horses.[116]

In the meantime, the Basmils, who rebelled against the Gökturk State, were once taken under suzerainty.[117] In 705, when Empress Wu abdicated the throne to Chung Tsung, one of the true heirs, the Chinese changed their strategy. They sent many spies to the Gökturk country, encouraged the tribes to revolt and took defence measures on the borders. Most of the Turkic tribes revolted. The Chiks were defeated between Kem-Irtiş and the Azs were defeated west of Isık Göl in 709.[118] In 710, the Kyrgyz rebelled and were defeated for the second time by the armies under the command of Bilge and Kül Tegin in the Songa forest north of

[111] Kafesoğlu, *olinecit*.

[112] Chavannes, *olinecit*., line 67.

[113] R. Giraud, *L'Empire de Turs Celestes*, Map 4.

[114] CTS 194A, line 5170; HTS 4, line 101; 215A, line 6047.

[115] HTS 215A, line 6047

[116] This information only exists in TCTC 207.

[117] Bilge, East, st 25; Kafesoğlu, *olinecit*., line 113.

[118] Bilge, East, 26th line



the Kogmen Mountains.[119] In the same year Bayırkular were defeated in the battle near Lake Türgi-yargin.[120] In 711, after the Turgish rebellion was suppressed, Bars Beg was appointed Turgish Khan and married to Bilge's sister. In 713 the Karluks were defeated at Tamug Idukbas.

In 714, some Gökturk beys who failed north of Beşbalık took refuge in China. Although Kapgan's rule had begun to fracture, the Mongol tribes of Kytans and Hsis remained loyal to him. However, his old age and excessive harshness caused great damage to the state. Therefore, several large Turkic tribes in the west, such as the Turgish and Karluks, applied to China to become vassals (715, 4th month). Although the Chinese accepted their offer, they demanded that they occupy important strategic positions within the Gökturk country.[121] In the spring of the same year, some of the defeated Nine Oghuz also sought refuge in China. In the face of all these events, Kapgan repeatedly attacked and dispersed Karluk and other rebellious tribes. Nevertheless, Azlar and Izgils joined the rebellious tribes in 715.[122] The breakaways from the Gökturk State were unceasing. As a result, when the power of the state weakened, T'u-yü-hun and Kao-li (Koreans), who were the subjects of the state, were bound to China. Even Kapgan's son-in-law A-shih-te Hu-lo took refuge in China.[123]

Chinese Emperor Hsüan-tsung provoked Kapgan by bestowing gifts and titles to Turkic tribes in three different regions in order to weaken him completely and destroy the Gökturks. First of all, when Bayırkular rebelled, Kapgan immediately took action and defeated them heavily by the Tola River. However, while returning with a small number of troops, he was attacked and killed by the chief of the Bayırkus in the forest of Söğüt. His severed head was taken to China by the Chinese envoy Ho Ling-ch'üan who was with the Bayırkus at that time (716).[124]

Kapgan's son Inel succeeded him, but Kutlug's son Kül Tegin carried out a coup and eliminated him and his whole family. Then he put his older brother Bilge Shad on the throne as Khagan. Unlike other Gökturk kings, Bilge Khan is described as humane and sincere in the sources. Kül Tegin, who made his brother

[119] Kül Tegin, East, 35, 36; Bilge, East, 26-27, see also Giraud, line175.

[120] Kül Tegin, East, line 34; Lui, I, line 169.

[121] HTS 215 A, s.6048; CTS 194 A, s.5173.

[122] Kül Tegin, lines 3-4.

[123] HTS 215 A, line 6049.

[124] CTS 194 A, line 5173.

become the Khagan, became the Prince of Sol Bilge and started to manage military affairs. By the way, most of the statesmen of Kapgan's time were killed during the revolution, only Tonyukuk, Bilge's father-in-law, who was more than seventy years old and highly respected by the people, was left alive. Tonyukuk was reinstated due to his deep experience in state affairs.[125]

Born in 683, Bilge could not be appointed Khagan because he was too young when his father died in 691. However, he was appointed Shad over the Tardus people in 697. His territory was west of the southern foothills of the Altai Mountains, around the Irtysh River. Until 716, he participated in twenty-five expeditions to the Yellow River in the east, the Shan-tung Plain, the Iron Gate in the west, the Kyrgyz in the north of the Kogmen Mountains, and was successful in all of them.[126]

Clan rebellions against the state did not stop. In 716, the Uyghurs were defeated along the Selenga River.[127] In 717, a group of Oghuz fled to China. The Qantans and Tartabs allied themselves with the T'ang dynasty in China, while in the west the Turgish declared their independence under the leadership of Su-lo. Moreover, they stopped the Arab forces that wanted to advance eastwards from the Transoxiana. At such a confusing moment, Bilge appointed Tonyukuk to a state position.[128] In the summer of 717, Bilge punished the Tatabis who had joined China and seized their herds of horses and all their goods. In 718, when the Karluks were also defeated and their people were connected to the state, the Karluk problem was also solved. Bilge, who ensured peace in his country, turned his direction to China. He was planning a large-scale plunder and raid. Moreover, his power had increased with the return of those who had left years ago. However, Tonyukuk prevented him with his deep experience. Tonyukuk explained that people were enriched not by war but by peace, that the Göktürks had just gathered together, that they were still weak, and that it would take at least three more years to become stronger. Subsequently, Bilge Khan's desire to surround the cities with walls and thick fortifications, to build Buddhist temples and to spread Buddhism was also opposed by Tonyukuk. The Turks did not even constitute 1% of the Chinese population. Despite this, the Chinese were fought on the battlefields and were victorious. Waters and pastures were followed and they led nomadic lifestyle. Hunting was a criti-

[125] CTS 194 A, line 5173; HTS 215 B, line 6051; TT 1074c, 1075a; WHTK, 2691c.

[126] Bilge Khan Yazıtı, T. Tekin, *Orhon Yazıtları*, line 43 etc.

[127] Bilge Khan Yazıtı, East, 36-38.

[128] CTS 194 A, line5173; HTS 215 A, line6051; TT 1075a, WHTK 2692 c.



cal profession. Therefore, warfare was engaged in only if they were strong, they would attack and plunder, if they were weak, they would flee and hide in forests and mountains. Although the Chinese soldiers were populous, they were not superior. In other words, they could not show superiority on the battlefields because they were untrained and unskilled. The power of the Gökturk soldier, on the other hand, was largely based on lifestyle. If they built walled cities and lived in them, their traditions would change. As a result, once they came face to face, they were defeated and captured by the T'ang Dynasty. On the other hand, when it came to allowing the propaganda of Buddhism in the country and the application of the methods of this religion, it was a question of religion weakening the people. The Turks had to be militarily strong, and Buddhism prevented the Turks from being warriors, and from being strong. Therefore, it could not be practised in the country.[129]

Bilge Khan gave up raiding China after listening to and accepting Tonyukuk's advice.[130] Seeing that the Gökturks had regained their former strength, Emperor Hsüan-tsung made a grand plan to eliminate them (winter 720). The Chinese army was to attack the Göktürks in alliance with the Basmils, Kytans and Tatabis.[131] They were to raid and capture the Gökturk centre above the Chi-luo waterway. The Chinese did not stop there. They had made a secret alliance with Kutlug Bilge Khan of the Kyrgyz and other Gökturk opponents such as Kapgan's son Mo Tegin, Prince of Left Bilge, Prince of Right Bilge, A-shih-na Bilge Tegin, Prince of Yen-shan region Huo-pa-shih-shih-pi and many other beys and people. All of them had agreed to take action together with the Chinese.[132]. The army of the Chinese and their allies had reached 300 thousand. This army gathered above the Chi-luo water. It was divided into various branches and marched towards the Gökturks. Meanwhile, the Tatabis and Kytans from the east and the Basmils from the west were assigned to move separately from different routes to raid the Gökturk centre. In the face of all these events, Bilge Khan became frightened and worried. However, the experienced statesman Tonyukuk immediately stepped in and told him:

The Basmils are now in Pei-t'ing (Beshbalık). The Tatabis and Kytans are in the east, too far apart. They cannot join forces and act together. Huei and Chang Chia-chen are at odds. They can't move together. If they come, we'll retreat north-east

129 CTS 194 A, 5174; HTS 215B, 6052; TT 1075a; WHTK 2693 a.

130 Only appears in HTS 215B, 6052; However, does not appear in CTS 194A, TT and WHTK.

131 CTS 194 A, line 5174, TT ibid.; WHTK ibid.

132 HTS 215B, 6052.

three days in advance. They'll run out of food and supplies and go back. The strength of the Basmils is small (light). If they arrive first, we will fight.[133]

Tonyukuk's predictions turned out to be right. In the autumn of 721, the Basmils attacked the centre of the Göktürks alone and separately from the others. The Chinese, Tatabis and Kytans had not yet arrived. They were frightened and retreated.[134] Therefore, T'ang Emperor Hsüan-tsung's plan was foiled from the very beginning. When Bilge wanted to follow the retreating troops, Tonyukuk prevented the Göktürks' army from going fast. As he stated that the people would die in battle after travelling a long distance, and that there had not yet been a battle, so the best way was to proceed with the infantry.

Bilge Khan was relieved upon this victory and turned his direction towards China and plundered the Kansu region, which he quickly entered. After heavily defeating the Chinese armies sent against him, he did not advance further. Because he well understood that it was useless to go too far into China, especially on the advice of Toyukuk. As it is understood from his own words in his inscription, his main goal was to ensure peace and prosperity in his country.[135] Therefore, he sent an embassy delegation and offered peace.[136] In 720, when these battles took place, seventeen thousand people were killed on the first day, and on the second day the entire infantry armies were destroyed.[137] The rebellion of the Kytans and Tatabis against the Gökturk State did not go unpunished, and the Kytans were defeated in the winter of 721 and the Tatabis in the spring of 722.

Finally, Emperor Hsüan-tsung of the T'ang dynasty in China was forced to recognise the power of Bilge Khan. While improving peace relations on the one hand, he started to increase defence measures on the borders on the other. Meanwhile, in the negotiations held in his palace among his own statesmen, it was emphasised that Bilge Khan was a good administrator, managed people well and had a friendly personality, while his brother Kül Tegin was an excellent warrior, a good commander, and Tonyukuk was a very brave, old, knowledgeable and experienced person who was dangerous for China.[138]

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133 CTS ibid.; HTS ibid.; TT 1076b; WHTK ibid.

134 CTS ibid.

135 Bilge Khan Inscription, East, 18-25.

136 CTS 194 A, line 5175; HTS 215 B, line 6053; TT 1076 b; WHTK 2693.

137 Bilge Khan Inscription, South, 1, 2.

138 CTS 194 A, ibid.; HTS 215 B, ibid.; TT ibid.; WHTK ibid



In order to maintain friendly relations with China, Bilge Khagan sent his vizier Buyruk Çor to the Chinese palace and offered famous horses. He also stopped military activities on the Chinese borders. According to the agreement, hundreds of thousands of silk cloths were to be sent to the Sky Turks every year.[139]

In 731, the Second Gökturk State lost a great hero. Bilge's brother Kül Tegin had passed away.[140] His death deeply affected his older brother Bilge. That's why, the inscription he erected in his name states that:

My brother Kül Tegin passed away. I mourned myself. My seeing eyes became as if they could not see, and my mind became as if it could not think. I was immersed in my own thoughts. When the God of Time decreed, I thought that the son of man was always created mortal, and I mourned by preventing tears from coming from my eyes and rejecting the cry of my heart. I mourned a lot. The eyes and eyebrows of my brothers, sons, beys and people, especially the two shad, will be ruined.[141] I have expressed my sadness by saying that I thought.

The funeral of Kül Tegin was attended by all the neighbours of the Göktürks. In the east, the Kytans and Tatabis sent representatives. Uder was at their head. The Emperor of China sent Isiyi Likeng with thousands of silk fabrics, gold and silver items.[142] The Tatabis participated with the representative of their ruler, Bökün. From the distant neighbours to the west came the Sogdians, Iranians and the people of Bukhara city, General Nek and Tarkan the Son.[143] From the Turgish (On-ok) Khaganate, who was also Bilge's son-in-law, Tamgaci (sealer) Makarach and Oguz Bilge represented them, while the Kyrgyz Khaganate was represented by Tardush Inanchu Cor.[144] In 572, it is understood that a big funeral ceremony was held for Kül Tegin as it was held for Mukan Khagan (1 November 731).

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139 CTS 194 A, line.5177.

140 KT, KD "Kül Tegin passed away in the Year of the Sheep, on the seventeenth day. We completed the mourning ceremony on the twenty-seventh day of the ninth month. We finished his mausoleum, paintings, statues, and inscription stone in the Year of the Monkey, on the twenty-seventh day of the seventh month. Kül Tegin himself was forty-seven years old.The master builders, as well as the many painters and sculptors, were brought by Tuygun Elteber."

141 KT, K, 10, 11.

142 Chinese sources report that Chang Ch'ü-i and Lü Hsiang were sent to attend the funeral and offer sacrifices. CTS 194A, 5177; HTS 215B, line 6054.

143 KT, K, 11-12.

144 KT, K, 13.

A monument was to be erected for Kül Tegin. The words of the Sage were carved on the inscription by Yollug Tegin. The best artists and craftsmen were brought from China and an extraordinarily beautiful mausoleum was built. Painters and sculptors were employed to decorate the interior and sculptures were also placed.[145] Bilge had the inscription erected near the centre of the Sky Turks.[146] The Emperor of China had sent six highly skilled craftsmen to write his own words on the inscription, to erect the tomb and other works. The inscriptions and the tomb and statues were as clean and elegant as silk. It is reported that Bilge was saddened when he saw these because there were no such beautiful writings and artefacts in the Gökturk country before.[147]

Bilge Khagan was now alone. Since 697, Kül Tegin and Tonyukuk, with whom he had fought shoulder to shoulder in state administration and battlefields, were no longer there. There was already no power left in Central Asia to stand against him. Only in 733, the Tatab people had separated from the Kytans. They would probably revolt. Bilge Khagan defeated their army at Töngker Mountain and killed thirty thousand of their soldiers. Meanwhile, when his eldest son fell ill and died, he erected General Ku as a balbal.[148]

The Second Gökturk Khaganate had been living in peace with China for a long time. Bilge Khan reiterated his wish to marry a Chinese princess. When Emperor Hsüang-tsung said he could accept, he sent Ko-chie-li-pi to thank him and proposed to start the marriage process.[149]

After that, unexpectedly, the Sage was poisoned by an Order Cor.[150] There is no information about the reason of his poisoning Bilge in the sources. However, Buyruk Çor had travelled to China as an envoy several times. He might have been influenced by the Chinese there. On the other hand, Bilge, as we mentioned above, was now alone in the state administration and life without Tonyukuk and Kül Tegin. Bilge did not die immediately after being poisoned and realised that he was poisoned by Buyruk Çor. Thereupon, he had him and all his family and col-

145 KT, G, 11, 12.

146 Approx. latitude 47 latitude 102 longitude around Lake Koso Chaydam near the old bed of the Orkhon River

147 CTS 194A, 5177; HTS 215B, 6094.

148 BK, G 9.

149 HTS 215B, line 6054.

150 CTS 194A, ibid.; HTS 215A, ibif.



laborators killed. He himself died on 25 November 734.[151] His funeral was held on 22 June 735.[152] His son (I-jan Khagan) organised a big funeral for him. Five hundred people came from China under the command of Lisün Tay Sengün. He brought plenty of gold and silver. They also brought sandalwood. The whole nation cut their hair and ears at the funeral ceremony and presented their best breed horses, black otters and sky squirrels (furs) as gifts.[153] This inscription was written by Yollug Tegin in one month and four days.[154] The decorations were also created by him. The Emperor of China sent Li Ch'üan with an edict to attend the funeral of the Sage. His mausoleum was also built. Li Jung was assigned to write the Chinese text on the inscription of the Sage.[155]

Upon Bilge's death, the statesmen gathered and placed his son on the throne of the Second Gökturk State as the Khagan. The title of the new Khagan was I-jan. However, I-jan Khagan could not live long and died from the disease he caught. His brother succeeded him and took the title of Tengri Khagan.[156] Tengri Khagan, who did not seem to be capable in state affairs due to his young age, actually lost the administration to his mother. His mother, who collaborated with Yü-ssu Tarkan, one of the viziers, offended most of the statesmen. His uncles who ruled the eastern and western wings of the state were loved by the shads, tribes and people. Their increasing influence was envied by the mother of the Kaghan and the aforementioned Tarkan. As a result, the western wing ruler shad was killed, while the eastern wing shad managed to save himself. Moreover, he attacked and killed Tengri Khagan. The state was thrown into turmoil for no reason. The eastern shad P'an Kül Tegin had put another son of Bilge on the throne. But no one supported him. When the Basmils took advantage of the opportunity and attacked him, he lost all his strength and fled alone. Meanwhile, Kutlug Yabgu killed the kaghan he had put on the throne before and made another son of Bilge Khagan the ruler. After a while, Yabgu eliminated him too and declared himself as the Khagan.[157]

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151 Twenty-sixth of the tenth month of the Year of the Dog.

152 Twenty-seventh of the fifth month of the Year of the Pig.

153 BK, G, 10-15.

154 BK, GB, 1.

155 CTS 194A, a.; HTS 215B ibid.

156 CTS 194 A, line 5177; HTS 215 B, line 6054.

157 HTS 215 B, line 6054; TCTC 214, line 6844.

The Chinese were mobilised by this confusion in the Gökturk country. An envoy was sent to Uighurs, Basmil and Karluks and these tribes revolted. The rebels killed Kutlug Yabgu and elected the Basmil chief as the Khagan. Karluk and Uighurs took the right and left yabguluks. The Göktürks, who survived the raid of the rebel tribes, elected Ozmish (Wu-su-mi-shih), the son of the former eastern wing Shady P'an Kül Tegin, as Khagan.[158]

Ozmış knew that the state had lost its power. Therefore, he came to China and declared his allegiance to the T'ang Emperor and said that he would visit him. However, when he later renounced this intention, the Chinese had Uighurs, Karluks and Basmils attack him and kill him. Oztym's severed head was taken to the Chinese capital.[159] Although many of their kings were eliminated one after another, the remaining Gökturks were undaunted. In fact, their population was very low. Oztysh's son Pai-mei was elected Khagan (744). In the meantime, the three rebellious tribes were at odds. The chief of the Basmyls, who had been declared Khagan, was killed by the Uighurs and Karluks, and the Uighurs declared their own Khaganate and established their state. The founder of the Uighurs, Kutlug Boyla Kül Khan, attacked and defeated Pai-mei Khan and his severed head was sent to the Chinese capital like his father.[160]

After the fall of the Göktürks, the rulers of the dynasty and some of the people took refuge in China. In fact, their numbers had been greatly reduced due to years of civil war. The beys were given various Chinese titles and the people were settled in the northern provinces. The name Gökturk continued to exist in Chinese sources until 941. In the short records relating to them, we see that these groups often rebelled against the T'ang dynasty in China, but they did not succeed due to their small forces.[161]

The Political and Social Structure of the Gökturk State

In the Göktürks, the word "state" was used to mean "il". The province is the final form of the family (oguş), the union of families (uruğ), and the union of tribes (boy), respectively.

[158] HTS 215 B, ibid.; TCTC 215, line 6809-6860; CTS 103, line 3198.

[159] HTS 133, line 5553; CTS 103, ibid.; TCTC 215, line 6860.

[160] TFYK 970, 20b; TCTC 215, line 6863.

[161] CTS 9, line 215, 228; HTS 5, line 148, 150.



At the beginning of the Gökturk history, Bumın took the title of Il (Illig) Khan after the declaration of independence.[162] Since there was a state, it had to have a system, an organisation, institutions and law. The core of the social structure was the family. The next link was the union of clans, families and urugs; beys were at the head of the clans. The tribes included in a political union were called "ok". The unity of the tribes was called bodun, which was headed by administrators such as yabgu, shad, ilteber depending on the size of the land.[163] In order for a state (i.e. a province) to be independent, it must fulfil certain conditions. These are political independence, country, people and law.[164]

In 552 the Gökturks won their independence.[165] The gaining and losing of the independence of the Gökturks was described with great importance in the Orkhun Monuments, and it was strongly recommended that the loss of independence was almost a death for the nation, and the gaining of independence was a resurrection, and that the nation should take many lessons from this.[166] During the period between 630-680, when the state fell into Chinese captivity, many independence movements occurred, and finally the rebellion that started in 679 enabled the state to regain its independence in 682. When the state regained its independence, the kings made extraordinary efforts to rescue the Turkic tribes in China. These are the most important documents showing the importance given to independence in the Gökturk state.[167]

The value of the country, that is, the homeland in the Gökturks is clearly explained in the Orkhun Monuments. The centre Ötüken was considered sacred (Iduk Ötüken). In fact, the Orkhon inscriptions (the bittersweet memories of the Turkish

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162 Chinese sources CS 50, line 908-909; SS 84, line 1864; PS 87, line 3286-3287; HTS 215 A, line 6028.

163 See İbrahim Kafesoğlu, *Türk Milli Kültürü*, Istanbul 1984, p.215 etc.

164 *ibid.,* pp.220, 235.

165 CS 50, line 908; Also see Liu Mau-tsai, *Die Chinesischen Nahcrihten zur Geshicte der Ost Türken (T'u-küe),* Wiesbaden 1958, I, s.6; A. Taşağıl, *Gök-Türk Ülkesine Gelen Çinli Elçilerin Raporlarına Göre Gök-Türk -Çin İlişkileri (630-680)*, (Unpublished MA Thesis), Istanbul Üniversitesi SBE, Istanbul 1989, p.43.

166 Lines about independence in the Orkun Inscriptions: Kül Tegin, Doğu Face, 7, 9, 10, 22; South Face, 6; North Face, 2, 4, 6. Bilge Khan, East Face, 9, 18, 19; Tonyukuk, 3, 10 etc. (M. Ergin, "Orhun Abideleri", Istanbul 1980).

167 CTS 194 A, line 5169-5170; HTS 215A, lines 6045-6046; Also see: A. Taşağıl, "Kapgan Khan Devrinde Gök-Türk-Çin Münasebetleri", *Türk Dünyası Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 65 (1990), pp.309-312.

nation were written and erected in stone so that they would not be forgotten by future generations) are the result of the idea that those lands will remain the Turkish homeland forever. Chinese sources report that the Gökturk borders were ten thousand li (more than five thousand kilometres) from east to west and five thousand li (more than two thousand five hundred kilometres) from south to north.[168]

In the Gökturk state, the people (kün) were equipped with personal law, economic freedoom and could own private property. Private property also applies to agricultural land. [169] There was no slavery in the Gökturks. The word "kul" was used for slavery. Like all other ancient Turkic states established in the steppe area, the Gökturk State had a political and military character and did not have a religious character.[170]

As reported in the Orkhon inscriptions, the whole set of laws in the Gökturk state was called "custom". In the inscriptions, the word töre appears in 11 places, and in six of them it is used together with the term il (state). In five other places, its relation with il is clearly defined.[171] Customary provisions could change in order to maintain their effectiveness under different circumstances. However, some provisions of the custom were absolutely unchangeable: These were könilik (justice), uzluk (goodness, usefulness), tüzlük (equality), kişilik (humanity). It is understood that the understanding of homeland in the Gökturk province developed as a state philosophy.

In the Gökturks, the sovereignty, that is, the head of state, is represented by the Khaganate. The head of state also bore the title of Khagan. According to the sources, otağ, örgin (throne), tug (wolf-headed banner), drum (sorguç-köbürge) and bow were the symbols of sovereignty. Again, as in other ancient Turkic states, these elements had the same function in the Gökturks. At the time when they frequently put their intrigues against the Gökturk State into practice, the Chinese sent a wolf-headed banner and a drum to the Gökturk princes they supported. In this way, they expressed that they recognised them as rulers. Besides the title of Khagan, the title of khan is used only once in the Tonyukuk inscription.

168 CS 50, line 909; PS 87, line 3287

169 Kafesoğlu, pp.233-235; B. Ögel, *Türk Kültürünün Gelişme Çağları*, Istanbul 1988, p.452.

170 In relation to the people see the Orkhon Inscriptions: Kül Tegin, East Face, 6, 7, 8, 11, 13. Wise Khan, Eastern Face, 1, 7, 8, 21, 22, Tonyukuk, 51.

171 For traditions in the Orhun Inscriptions see. Kül Tegin, East Face 2, 3, 26-27 etc. Bilge Khan, Doğu Facesi, 4, 21, 22 etc.



It was believed that the Khaganate was given to a person by God. The Turkic ruler enforces the laws (töre) and obeys them himself, but he cannot make laws.[172] The kings ruled the state too harshly, which led to the rebellion of the nation. According to Chinese sources, due to the mistreatment of the people by the Gökturk Khan Kapgan, rebellions frequently broke out in the Gökturk country, and finally, after one of them was suppressed, Kapgan was killed by the chief of the rebellious Bayırku tribe who ambushed in the forest (716).[173] In a way, this event was the reaction of the Gökturk people against the khan who mistreated them. The titles taken by the Gökturk Khagans can be listed as "Great Khagan, Kutlug, Beğçor, Taken from the Great Sky, Similar to God, Created by the Sky, Turk Bilge Khagan, Born in the Sky, The Great Ruler of the Sky Turks and the World".[174]

Another evidence showing that the khagan was responsible to his nation in the Gökturk State is the enthronement ceremony recorded in Chinese sources. Accordingly, during the ceremony, the khan's throat is wrapped with a silk, then squeezed and released and asked how many years he will serve as khan.[175] The Khagan would blush again and again in a difficult situation, and his words would be carefully listened to and analysed by the nation. In fact, before this, the statesmen used to make him sit on a felt and turn him from east to west in the direction of the sun. At every turn, all the people would bow and salute him. In order to become a successful Khagan, a Turk had to possess three main qualities given to him by God. These were favour, kut and kismet (ulüg).[176]

The main duties of the Gökturk Khagan towards his nation are: "To be at the head of his army; to feed and clothe the people; to house and settle the people; to win the hearts of the people and to win their love and respect". The most important characteristics of the person who would become a Khagan were to be wise, alpine, truthful and virtuous. The existence of a parliament in the Gökturk State is evident from Chinese records and Orkhun Inscriptions. This assembly, which was a legislative assembly, was actually an institution that had been in existence since

[172] For rulership, see the Orkhon Inscriptions see. Kül Tegin. East Face 25, 27; South Face 1, 9, 10. Bilge Khan, East Face 1, 7, 8, 21, 22. Tonyukuk 51.

[173] CTS 194 A, s.5173; HTS 215 A, line 6049. Also see: Liu, op.cit., I, p.171 et.al..; R. Giraud, *L'Empire des Turc Celestes*, Paris 1962, p.52.

[174] Ögel, p.593-594

[175] CS 50, p.909; TFYK 961, line.11311.

[176] Ögel, p.571.

the pre-bellum period. The equivalent of the word "assembly" was "toy".[177] The council was chaired by the Khagans. Sometimes Ayguci and Uges presided. These persons were also in the position of prime minister. The assembly (toy) played a major role in the enthronement and deposition of rulers in the history of the Göktürks.[178] The proposals put forward by Bilge Khagan in 723 were not accepted by the Gökturk state council.[179] During the enthronement ceremony of the people, it was believed that placing the khagan on felt and lifting him into the air represented the active participation of the people. The Toyguns participating in the ceremonies had titles such as tegin, kül-çor, apa, erkin, tudun, ilteber, tarhan. The Toyuns first started with religious-national ceremonies, all the issues of the state were discussed, and then banquets were given.

According to the Orkhon Inscriptions, the word for government in the Gökturks was "ayukı".[180] It was convened when the state assembly could not convene. According to Chinese sources, the Gökturk government consisted of 9 ministers (emirs). The members of the government had titles such as çor, ilteber, buyruk-çor, etc.[181] At the head of the government were non-dynastic aygucs or ügeler. In addition to these, there were also tamgacı and bitigçiler in the state centre. Tamgaci were the scribes and sealers, and bitigists were the scribes responsible for correspondence. According to Chinese sources, there were more than 28 titles in the Gökturk state system. In the Gökturk State, the high state court was called "yargu" and the judges were called yargan. Tonyukuk, the famous Gökturk statesman, was the president of the court, that is, a judge. Rulers were also judges.[182] According to the sources, the penal provisions in the Gökturk country were as follows:

> Those who committed adultery were sentenced to death; those who committed manslaughter were sentenced to death; those who committed robbery and stole horses were sentenced to death; those who cheated on young girls were obliged to pay a heavy compensation with property and had to marry the girl; those who injured a man had to compensate for their offences by paying property according to the degree of the wound; those who stole horses and sheep were sentenced to pay more than ten

177 Kafesoğlu, p.250.

178 CS 50, line.908; SS 84, line.1865.

179 CTS 194 A, line 5174-5175; HTS 215 A, line 6045.

180 Kül Tegin, West Face, I; East Face 3, 5, 1, Bilge Khan, East Face 4, 6, 2, 3. 141 Kafesoğlu, p.283.

181 Kafesoğlu, p.283.

182 For comprehensive information on this subject see. Kafesoğlu, p.280.



times; other minor offences were punished for no more than 10 days; those who betrayed the homeland and deserted from the army were sentenced to death.[183] Punishments were applied to everyone without discrimination.

In the Gökturk State, all people were free. Women also had an important place in society. Women also had a say in state administration.[184] Again in the inscriptions, Bilge Khagan's praising words about his mother and likening her to a goddess is very valuable historical information highlighting the importance given to women by the Gökturks. On the other hand, the phrase "Your daughter-in-law has become a concubine", indicating that women have achieved a high status is also very valuable information that indicates the value given to women by the Gökturks. It could be argued that concubinage is not at all positive. On the contrary, it is a humiliating situation for any woman to be and is also remarkable in terms of our cultural history. In fact, the word küng (kün) meaning concubine in the inscriptions is originally Chinese (ch'üen).

When a man loved a girl, he would send one of his relatives to her family to propose. There was marriage (Leviratus) with the wives of deceased fathers, uncles and brothers. In this way, the widows were prevented from being in a difficult situation. In other words, the integrity of the family was protected via exogamy.[185]

Their taxes were horse and sheep. Calculations were made by putting notches on the sides of the carts. It should be quite normal for the Gökturks, who maintained a non-settled life style, to keep their accounts in this way. In addition, golden arrows were applied to wax and used as seals (tamga).

Since private property existed, we understand that everyone owned a piece of land in the Gökturk State. Because some Turkic tribes cultivated plants (trees, etc.) near the eastern regions of today's West Turkestan. Daughters were also given importance, and the right of inheritance of the daughter went to the husband's house as dowry. In the Gökturk State, it was a great honour to die in battle, and it was undesirable to die one one's sick bed. The final judgement of the penal provisions prevented the bloodshed. Greeting is found in the Gökturk inscriptions in the form of bowing and kneeling.

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183 CS 50, line 909; SS 84, line1863 et.al.; TFYK 961, line11311.

184 SS 84, line1876.

185 W. Eberhard, *Çin'in Şimal Komşuları*, Ankara 1942, p.76 et.la..; Ögel, .241-248; Kafesoğlu, p.216

Conclusion

The history of the Gökturks, who had the honour of naming the Turkish nation, lasted approximately two hundred years as an independent state. The Turkish nation and culture emerged systematically in all respects during the Gökturk period and this system shaped Turkish history. In fact, there was a Turkish nation and therefore history before that. Turkic communities on two continents had formed states and similar political organisations under different names. However, the realisation of the Turkish name, language and culture being recognised by foreign states and becoming widespread was entirely thanks to the Gökturks. On the other hand, more or less all Turkic tribes were united into a state.

As a matter of fact, the real name of this state is the Turkish Khaganate. All states established after their collapse bear the traces of the Gökturks. As a matter of fact, names such as Turk, Turkmen, Tork, Turkey have been engraved in the memories of foreign nations and have survived to the present day.

In the Gökturk history, there is a composition of tribes that took on different names and organisations over time. The distribution and mobilisation of the tribes continued even after the collapse of the Gökturk State in 745, even played a leading role in migrations, and finally survived to the present day. The Göktürks, who founded the first state in the history of the Turkic world to be called Turk, have a distinguished place in our history due to this feature. When the tribe system on which the Gökturk Khaganate was based is analysed well, it is understood that it is a bridge that continues uninterruptedly in the following centuries and reaches today's Turkish World. The discovery and reading of inscriptions written in Turkish from this period proved that they are the most fundamental treasures of Turkish culture.

In the mid-6th century, the new political formation starting from the southern foothills of the Altai Mountains and spreading towards Ötüken would deeply affect Turkish and world history. Because, a new state was born under the name of Turk. This state would cover a wide area from Manchuria to the Black Sea in a short time, and would be known by the name of Turk both in the eastern and western parts of the world. This Turkish Khaganate, state or empire would form a model of Turkish history that would last until the 21st century.

From today's point of view, in order to understand the Republic of Turkey, it is necessary to know the Gökturks, just as it is necessary to learn Gökturk history in



order to understand the Sahas (Yakut) at the farthest point, or the Chuvash, whose language and religion have changed a lot compared to ours. Otherwise, we cannot include the Shors, Altai Kijis, Tuvans and Khakas in the depths of Siberia into the Turkic world. In fact, the connection of Azerbaijanis, Turkmens, Uzbeks, Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, Uyghurs and even related Mongols with the Gökturk history is very clear.

The Gökturks are somehow connected with every living Turkic community. In this period, the word "Turk" took its place in the history of the world as the name of a nation and a state in a distinct way, and the foundation of the expansion to three continents was laid. If we hold the Gökturk Khaganate as a mirror, we have the opportunity to go back to the ancestors of the Huns. Again, we can analyse the European Huns, Avars, Sabars, Pechenegs, Ogurs and Bulgars, Uzs and Kuman-Kipchaks according to the Gökturk model. The term Turkic Khazar, recorded in Chinese sources about the Khazars, means a lot.

It is impossible to understand the whole Turkish history without learning the Gökturk history. Today, the Turkish language spoken in communities other than a few of the peoples of Turkic origin in the world is related to the language spoken and written by the Gökturks. In other words, the foundations of Turkish are revealed in the Gökturk period. The Turkish spoken and written in the states established later and today is the continuation of Gökturkish.

Administrative structure, state organisation, social life, in short, the steppe culture has maintained its continuity in the whole Turkish World, especially in Anatolia, and has managed to reach to the present day. Gökturk history and culture is a model in this respect. One of the most interesting examples is the fact that the lifting up of the throne by sitting on a felt rug, which was performed in the Gökturks during the enthronement ceremonies, has been kept alive in Kazakhs until the last periods. Thousands of such examples can be shown.

In reality, the greatest contribution of the Gökturks to Turkish history was in terms of political history. After their political layer weakened and withdrew from the stage of history, the Uighur, Karakhanid, Ghaznavid, Seljuk, Ottoman, Republic of Turkey and other states and principalities of Turkish origin are the continuation of the Gökturks.

ABBREVIATIONS

CS: : Chou Shu
CTS: : Chiou T'ang Shu
HTS: : Hsin T'ang Shu
Pien-cheng Pien-cheng Yen-chiou Suo Nien-pao
PCS: : Pei Ch'i Shu
PS: : Pei Shih
SS: : Suei Shu
TC: : T'ung Chih
TCTC: Tsu-chih T'ung-chien
TFYK: Ts'e-fu Yüan-kuei
TT: : T'ung Tien
WHTK: Wen-hsien T'ung-k'ao

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Bilge Khagan and Kültigin Inscriptions



Source: Ahmet Taşağıl Archive

Appendix 2: Gökturk Sculpture



Source: Ahmet Taşağıl Archive

Appendix 3: Gökturk Sculpture



Source: Ahmet Taşağıl Archives

Appendix 4: Bilge Khagan Treasures



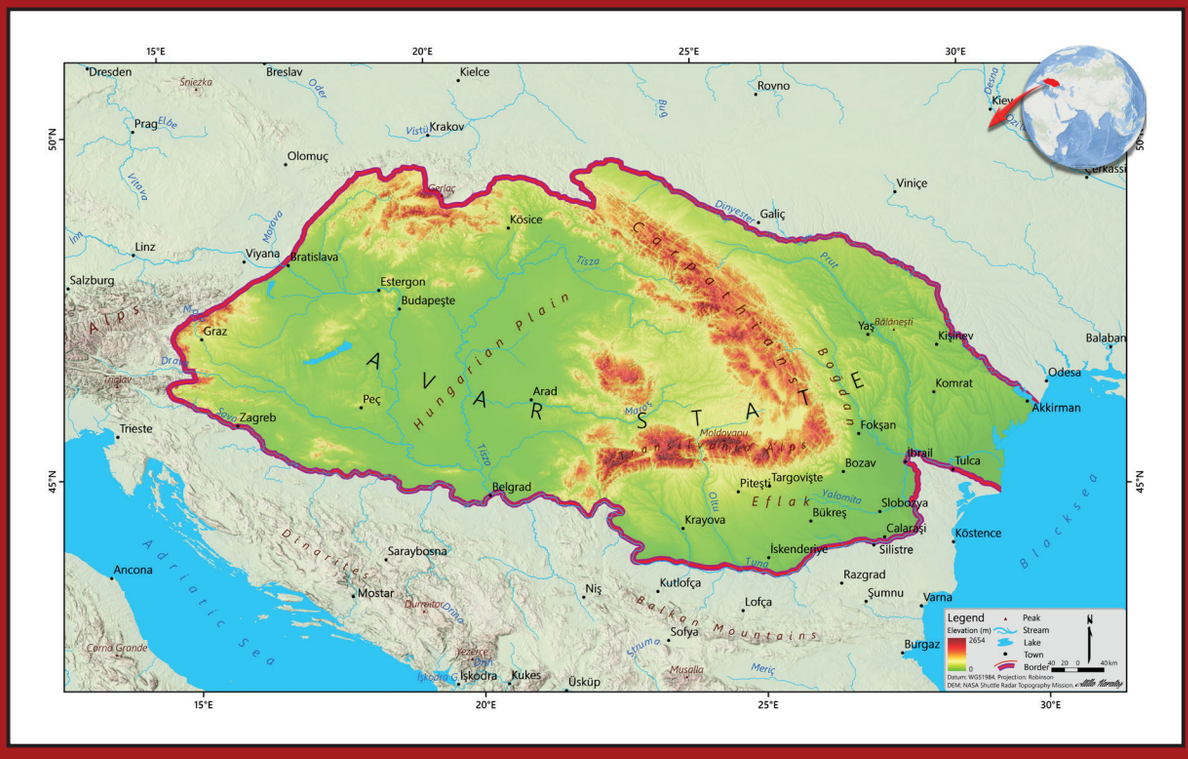
Source: Ahmet Taşağıl Archives

Annex 5: Statues of Kül Tegin and other Turkish beys (head)



Source : Ahmet Taşağıl Archive

The Avar State



Source: Atilla Karataş Collection



THE AVAR STATE

(558– 822)

Tolga ERSOY*

Introduction

During the medieval period, several nomadic groups originating from Central Asia have entered historical records as occupying areas in the Northern Black Sea and Eastern Europe. Subsequent to the migration of the European Huns, which triggered the Great Migration (Völkerwanderung), a pivotal element in the transition from Antiquity to the Middle Ages, various nomadic groups, including the Kutrigurs, Utigurs, Avars, Bulgars, Khazars, Magyars, Pechenegs, Cumans, and Tatars, emerged in this extensive region, each fulfilling notable historical functions.

Among these, the Avars emerged as a significant power in Eastern Europe and the Northern Black Sea region after the disintegration of the European Hunnic Empire. The Avars established a significant nomadic state in Early Medieval Europe, exhibiting particular dominance from the 6th to the 9th centuries CE. Emerging from the Central Asian steppes, the Avars traversed westward, eventually establishing the Avar Khaganate in the Carpathian Basin, marking a significant epoch in the historical narrative of Eastern Europe. Possessing a militarily

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powerful cavalry, an advanced political framework, and unique cultural and traditional practices, the Avars served as an essential intermediary between Eastern and Western civilizations.

Furthermore, in the course of their migrations, the Avars established numerous Slavic tribes in the Balkans, profoundly transforming the demographic composition of the region, with repercussions that persist into the present.[1] The Avars established diplomatic relations with both the Byzantines and the Franks, playing a critical role in the Sasanian siege of Constantinople and later skirmishes with the Franks under Charlemagne. Nonetheless, during times of peace, they also maintained commercial ties with these states.

Archaeologically, the abundance and variety of artefacts found in Avar graves and settlements offer significant insights into their social stratification, belief systems, and artistic accomplishments. Notwithstanding the abundance of these material artefacts, historical sources pertaining to Avar history are relatively limited, particularly in comparison to the extant narratives regarding the European Huns. The principal written sources for the history of the Avars are Byzantine and Carolingian chronicles.

An exhaustive evaluation of Avar origins, political trajectory, archaeological discoveries, artistic contributions, and cultural practices, informed by a rigorous comparison of these sources with contemporary scholarly investigations, can provide an enhanced comprehension of the Avars' historical significance and enduring impact.

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1 The Slavs brought from the north by the Avars were settled in the Vistula, Danube and Bohemia, refer to Ahmet Taşağıl, *Kök Tengri'nin Çocukları, Avrasya Bozkırlarına İslam Öncesi Türk Tarihi*, Bilge Kültür Sanat, Istanbul 2013, p.267. The Avars usually retreated behind the Danube after their raids on Byzantium, but the Slavs settled in the Balkan peninsula and caused the collapse of Byzantine rule in this region., see Georg Ostrogorsky, *Bizans Devleti Tarihi*, trans. F. Işıltan, Türk Tarih Kurumu Printing House, Ankara 1981, p.86-87. For a comprehensive study of Slavic migrations to the Byzantine Balkans, see. Johannes Koder, "On the Slavic Immigration in the Byzantine Balkans", *Migration Histories of the Medieval Afroeurasian Transition Zone, Aspects of Mobility Between Africa, Asia and Europe, 300-1500 C.E.*, ed. Johannes Preiser-Kapeller, Lucian Reinfandt, Yannis Stouraitis, Brill, Leiden & Boston 2000, p.81-100. It is known that the Slavic expansion of the Avar period reached the Peloponnesian Peninsula. For a study evaluating the cultural finds related to the Avaro-Slavic presence in this region, see Onur Türkay, "Peloponnesos Yarımadası'ndaki Avaro-Slav Varlığına Dair Bazı Kültürel Buluntular", *Balkanlarda Türk Dili ve Edebiyatı Araştırmaları*, V/2 (2023), p.291-332.



The Origin of the Avars

The Avars are commonly associated with the Juan-Juan (alternatively referred to as the Rouran or Apar), who are thought to have dominated regions in Asia from roughly 330 to 552 CE, prior to their displacement by the Göktürks. Subsequent to this defeat, it is hypothesized that remnants of the Juan-Juan migrated westward, ultimately establishing the Avar polity that established a steppe empire in the Carpathian Basin. Nevertheless, this association continues to be a topic of academic discussion, as Chinese historical documents do not explicitly reference a westward migration of the Juan-Juan.

The 5th-century Eastern Roman diplomat and historian Priscus Panites, in a passage featured in his work Excerpta de Legationibus Romanorum ad Gentes (Selections from the Records of Roman Envoys to Foreign Peoples), refers to the presence of the Avars in Western Siberia before the disintegration of the Juan-Juan state. This passage outlines a series of migrations encompassing various tribes, the Saragurs, Ogurs, and Onogurs, who had dispatched an embassy to the Eastern Roman Empire, were allegedly displaced from their territories as a result of aggressions by the Sabirs. In turn, the Sabirs had been driven from their own territory by the advancing Avars, who themselves had been forced to migrate due to pressure from tribes living along the ocean's edge.[2]

The earliest reference to the Avars in Western sources is the work titled Geographika (Geography) written by the Greek geographer Strabo (ca. 64 BC-AD 24), who lived in the first century AD. In this work, there is an ethnonym as Ápárnous [Apars].[3] This word is also transcribed as "Abar-noi" in some sources.[4] Historians have generally taken this statement out of context. Strabo mentions the Apars as a nomadic tribe living in Ochus, who supported the raid on Iran by the Parthian ruler Arsakes I (r. 247-217 BC). Thus, it is understood that this tribe played a critical part in the emergence of the Parthian Empire. Be as it may, in this passage of Geographika, Apars are treated as a tribe identical with Dahlar.

It is commonly accepted that the Avars referenced by Priscus and Strabo are not directly linked to the Avars who subsequently appeared in European history.

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2 *Prisc.,* fr. 40: *Exc. de Leg. Gent.* 14; also see Peter Golden, "Avars", *Late Antiquity: A Guide to the Postclassical World*, ed. G.W. Bowersock, P. Brown, O. Grabar, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, & London 2000, p.326.

3 Strabon, *Geographica*, XI. 9. 2.

4 İbrahim Kafesoğlu, *Türk Millî Kültürü*, Ötüken Publications, Istanbul 1997, p.161.

In Strabo's works, the group designated as the "Apar" may represent an early lineage or antecedent of the subsequent Avars. During that period, they were observed to reside in the area occupied by the Dahae, suggesting a likely connection with this group.[5]

Like Priskos, Zacharias Rhetor of Mytilene also included the Avars in his list of nomadic tribes beyond the Caspian passes.[6]

Therefore, it is clear that Western sources contain references to the Avars prior to their emergence as a state in Eastern Europe and the Northern Black Sea region. Byzantine sources, especially the works of Theophylact Simocatta, indicate a strong ethnic link between the Avars and the Hephthalites, commonly referred to as the White Huns (Akhuns). These sources frequently conflate the Avars with the Huns, and the terminology Uarhonit or War-Khon (Avar-Hun/Uar-Hun) encountered in these texts further substantiates this association, suggesting a common lineage or cultural connection between these groups.[7] Following the mid-4th century CE, the Avars separated from the Juan-Juan and began migrating westward, eventually participating in the establishment of the Hephthalite (White Hun) state. In the aftermath of the Juan-Juan defeat by the Northern Wei (Tabgach) in 458-459, this group

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5 The Apar tribal name is found in the Orkhon Inscriptions, see Ahmet Taşağıl, *Çin Kaynaklarına Göre Eski Türk Boyları*, Ankara, TTKB, 2004, p.48. On the occurrence of the name Apar in later Turkish inscriptions and Armenian sources, cf. Mehmet Tezcan, "The Ethnonym Apar in the Turkish Inscriptions of the 8th Century and Armenian Manuscripts", *Ērān ud Anērān. Studies presented to Boris Il'ič Maršak on the Occasion of His 70th Birthday, Matteo Compareti*, ed. P. Raffetta, G. Scarcia, Libreria Editrice Cafoscarina, Venezia 2006, s.603-615.

6 Zach. *Chron*. XII, vii.

7 Theoph. Simm., *Historiae, I. 3. 1*. In the evaluation of Simokattes' passage on the Avar-Hun identity, it should be taken into account that the Huns meant here are not the Huns of Europe, but the Akhuns, a tribe also highly valued by Byzantine historians. Saadettin Yağmur Gömeç states that the Akhuns and Avars should be considered as one, that Uar, one of the two elements in the sources, is Avar and the other is Hun, and that the Uar-Hun unity, which forms the basis of the Akhun-Ephthalites (Yüe-ban), is also reflected in the documents. Stating that the Chinese transcription "Hua" corresponds to Var (Apar), he stated that there is no need to look for other origins with regard to the European Avars, see Saadettin Yağmur Gömeç, "Türk Tarihinde Avarlar ve Avar Meselesi", *Kazakistan Cumhuriyeti'nin Bağımsızlığının 20. Yıldönümü Münasebetiyle IV. Uluslararası Türkoloji Kongresi, 13-14 Mayıs 2011,* Ahmet Yesevî Uluslararası Türk-Kazak Üniversitesi, Türkistan 2011, p.479-489. Gumilëv stated that the word "var" or "uar" means "river" and that this word preserved its special meaning in the Altai, for example, the Ursul river was also called Uar, see Lev Nikolayeviç Gumilëv, *Hazar Çevresinde Bin Yıl, Etno-Tarih Açısından Türk Halklarının ve Çevre Halklarının Şekillenişi Üzerine*, trans. D. Ahsen Batur, Selenge Publications, Istanbul 2003, p.234.



broke free from foreign dominance and reemerged as a confederation of War and Hun tribes, settling in the northern regions between the Caspian Sea and the Aral Sea.

It was during this period of political and military resistance that they came to be known as the Abar or Avar, a name likely derived from a term meaning "those who resist" or "the resistant ones," reflecting their defiance and independence.[8] The flight of the Avars from the Göktürks is usually associated with the end of the Göktürk domination of the Juan-Juans. However, the Göktürks and Sassanids formed a pact and eliminated the Akhuns as historical players due to the military campaigns they embarked on between 558-562 AD.[9] Some information regarding these campaigns survives in the fragments of the Byzantine historian and statesman Menandros Protector, as well as in the later work of Tabari.[10] Therefore, the separation of the Avars from the Göktürks is more appropriately linked to the collapse of the Hephthalite (White Hun) state rather than the fall of the Juan-Juan.[11] However, given the existence of the names Avar and War in regions previously dominated by the Hephthalites, some scholars take the view that the Hephthalite collapse may have acted as a trigger for the Avar migration.

Nonetheless, proponents of this perspective emphasize a significant temporal inconsistency: while the Göktürks concluded the reign of the Hephthalites, Avar diplomatic emissaries had already arrived in Constantinople, indicating that the Avar migration occurred prior to the ultimate demise of Hephthalite authority.[12] In this case, the Avar migration should be dated before the fall of the Akhuns. However, the earlier dating of the migration should not be interpreted as there were no

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8 Taşağıl, *Kök Tengri'nin Çocukları,* p.263. Juan-Juanların çöküşüne dair bir tetkik için bk. Enkhbat Avırmed, "Juan-Juanların Çöküşü ve Dağılışı", *Uluslararası Türkçe Edebiyat Kültür Eğitim Dergisi*, I/4 (2012), p.240-245. Avirmed criticised the view of Klashtorny and Sultanov that migration to the West and Korea took place after the collapse of the Juan-Juans, as there is no information in this direction in the sources., see Avırmed, p.245. Thus, the westward migration of the Avars should be dated to a time prior to the collapse of the Juan-Juan state.

9 Tolga Ersoy, "Bizans-Sâsâni Savaşları Bağlamında Prokopios'un Akhunları Tasviri", *XVII. Türk Tarih Kongresi, Ankara: 15-17 Eylül 2014, Kongreye Sunulan Bildiriler, II/I: Orta Asya ve Kafkasya Tarihi*, Ankara 2018, p.97.

10 Menand. Prot. fr. IV 1-8; *Tarih-i Taberî.* III, p.1060.

11 Although the factors indicating that the Avars who migrated to Eastern Europe were of Juan Juan origin are inconclusive, the evidence supporting their descent from the non-urban nomadic Hephthalites (Akhun) is considerably strong. For further details, see Károly Czeglédy, *Bozkır Kavimlerinin Doğu'dan Batı'ya Göçleri*, trans. Mutlu Gün, Doruk Publishing, Ankara 2004, p. 116.

12 Walter Pohl, *The Avars: A Steppe Empire in Central Europe*, *567–822,* Cornell Uni. Press, Ithaca & London 2018, p.42.

Akhun elements among the Avars. In addition to all these discussions, it should be noted that a fairly recent study based on DNA analyses from Hun and Avar graves points to a link in the ancestral kinship between the Huns and Avars.[13]

The Founding of the Avar Khaganate.

The establishment of the Avar Khaganate signifies a crucial juncture in the historical migration of nomadic groups to the regions of the Northern Black Sea and Eastern Europe. Subsequent to their collaboration with the Lombards in 567 AD to overcome the Gepids, the Avars established their supremacy over the Pannonia Plain within the Carpathian Basin, presently referred to as the Great Hungarian Plain. Geographically located between the Danube and Tisza Rivers, this area offered the Avars agricultural productivity, vital trade routes, and defensible topography.[14]

Following the demonstration of Avar power, King Bayan I (r. 562–582/4) capitalized on the chaos created by the Lombards' incursion into Italy and established control over the former territories of the Gepids.[15] The Pannonian Plain became the center of the Khaganate. The Avars, who established themselves in this area, initiated military campaigns and diplomatic efforts from this foundation. Through the consolidation of their authority in this region, they laid the groundwork for a centralized and hierarchical state framework grounded in steppe traditions. The Avar State was ruled by the Khagan, who possessed supreme political and spiritual authority. The title "Khagan" underscores the Turkic origins of the Avars and highlights their Central Asian heritage. As an emblem of unity and legitimacy, the Khagan presided over critical decisions, strategic alliances, and military operations. Nevertheless, central authority was frequently limited by internal conflicts and the presence of competing elites.

The Khagan won support from prominent officials, including subordinate leaders known as iugurrus, who managed significant administrative units, along with additional titled nobles. These individuals exerted significant power, representing the interests pertaining to their regions or tribes. Considering the extensive

[13] Maróti, Zoltán, Endre Neparáczki, Oszkár Schütz, et.al. "The Genetic Origin of Huns, Avars, and Conquering Hungarians", *Current Biology*, XXXII/13 (2022), p.2862.

[14] On the Avars' control of trade routes, see Saida Jafar Ismailzade, "The Influence of the Avar Khanate on the Ethno-political Situation in South-Eastern Europe", *International Science Journal of Jurisprudence & Philosophy,* III/5 (2024), p.28.

[15] Taşağıl, *Kök Tengri'nin Çocukları*, p.265.



territory of the Khaganate, regional leaders in remote areas possessed considerable autonomy. These nobles served as intermediaries between the Khagan and the tribal communities within his realm.

The Early Period of the Avar Khaganate and Relations with the Byzantine Empire

From its inception, the Avar Khaganate engaged in a complex relationship with the Byzantine Empire, characterized by phases of alliance, negotiation, and hostility. Byzantine emperors, aiming to manage the threat posed by the Avars, employed diplomacy alongside substantial tribute payments to maintain peace.[16] This was because the Byzantine Empire had previously avoided war by paying tribute to the European Huns. Priskos Panites described this practice as a policy of "buying peace".[17]

The first relations of the Avars with the Byzantine Empire are dated to January 558 during the reign of Justinian I (527-565).[18] At this time, the Avars, still located in the Caucasus region, demanded land for settlement, as well as annual tribute and gifts, and pledged to fight as allies against the enemies of Byzantium. Emperor Justinian I agreed to establish a formal alliance, sending tribute and valuable gifts; however, he rejected their request for land grants within the Byzantine Empire.[19] Although later dates have been proposed for the foundation of the Avar

[16] Archaeological evidence further indicates that the Byzantine Empire provided significant financial contributions to the Avars. Rásonyi posits that the Avars possessed considerable wealth in gold; for instance, in 599, they received 100,000 gold coins from the Byzantine Empire in lieu of the customary annual amount of 80,000. He observes that most of this gold was utilized in goldsmithing, and that during the excavation in Firtos (Transylvania), 3,000 Byzantine gold coins were found in conjunction with jewellery-making instruments and moulds. Moreover, in 796, subsequent to the capture of Avar fortifications situated along the Tisza River, an extensive treasure was confiscated by the Franks. See László Rásonyi, Hunlar, Avarlar, ve Macarlar Macar Arkeolojisinde, Ankara Halkevi Publications, Ankara 1938, p.18.

[17] Prisc. fr. 10: Exc. de Leg. Gent. 4. For a wider discussion of this practice, see. Tolga Ersoy, *Antikçağ ve Ortaçağ Filolojik Kaynaklarında Avrupa Hunlarının Temsili*, (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis), Mimar Sinan Güzel Sanatlar Üniversitesi, Istanbul 2024, p.105.

[18] Carlile Aylmer Macartney, "On the Greek Sources for the History of the Turks in the Sixth Century", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London,* XI/2 (1944), p.267.

[19] Georgios Kardaras*, Byzantium and the Avars, 6th-9th Century AD Political, Diplomatic and Cultural Relations,* Brill, Leiden & Boston 2019, p.20. Thanks to this alliance, the Byzantine Empire under Iustinian was protected from attacks by nomadic tribes such as the

Khaganate, it would be more accurate to accept 558 as the date of its foundation, when the first diplomatic relations were established with the Byzantine Empire as a state.[20] Although the Avars were still in the Caucasus at this time, they were now officially recognised as a state by Byzantium. After their demands were accepted by the Byzantine Empire, the Avars fought with other steppe tribes, defeated the Sabirs, Onogurs, Utrigur and Kutrigurs, and the Antes, a large Slavic tribe, and advanced into Eastern Europe by incorporating the remnants of these tribes. During the reign of Bayan I, they established sovereignty over many Turkic tribes and Slavic and Germanic peoples in the area from the Danube River to the Black Sea steppes.[21]

In the West, the Avars expanded their sphere of influence as far as the Elbe River through a series of raids, bringing them into conflict with the Franks in Thuringia. According to Decem libri Historiarum (The Ten Books of Histories) by Gregory of Tours, a Merovingian-era source, the Avars raided as far as the Gallia region following the death of Frankish King Chlothar I in 561. However, the same source notes that King Sigebert I successfully defeated the Avars in 562.[22] It is known that after this war, the Avar ruler sent envoys and tried to establish an alliance. In 566, the Avars once again raided Gallia, and although King Sigebert I came against them with a large army, he was defeated by the Avars.[23] In 567, Khagan Bayan allied with the Lombards in Pannonia, supporting them in their conflict against their traditional enemies, the Gepids. Following the Gepid defeat, the Av-

Utigurs, Kutrigurs and Sabirs. See Hatice Palaz Erdemir, *VI. Yüzyıl Bizans Kaynaklarına Göre Göktürk-Bizans İlişkileri*, Arkeoloji ve Sanat Publications, Istanbul 2003, p.27.

20 Many historians, notably Walter Polh, accept 567 as the date of the foundation of the Avar Khaganate. The reason for this is seen as the defeat of the Gepids by this date, the domination of the Carpathian Basin, and the establishment of political control over the Slavic peoples and other subordinate peoples, see Pohl, *The Avars*, p.69 etc. However, the political and military power that made it possible to defeat the Gepids and dominate the Carpathian Basin had already been established before this date and recognised by the Byzantine Empire. Taşağıl, on the other hand, dates the period of the Avar Khaganate between 558-805, see Taşağıl, *Kök Tengri'nin Çocukları*, p.267.

21 It is known that the Slavs settled by the Avars were engaged in agriculture and served as border guards, see Kafesoğlu, *Türk Millî Kültürü*, p.165.

22 Greg. Turon. *Hist. Franc*., IV. 23. For an analysis of the records on the Avars in this source work, see Tolga Ersoy, "Gregorius Turonensis'in 'Decem Libri Historiarum' Adlı Yapıtında Hunlara ve Avarlara Dair Kayıtların Değerlendirilmesi", *Bozkırın Oğlu: Ahmet Taşağıl'a Armağan*, ed. Tuğba Eray Biber, Yeditepe Yayınevi, Istanbul 2019, p.115-122.

23 Greg. Turon. *Hist. Franc*., IV. 29.



ars seized all Gepid territories east of the Tisza River, effectively expanding their dominion. Witnessing the growing power of the Avars, the Lombards migrated into Italy in 568, initiating a wave of invasions. This migration led to the permanent collapse of Byzantine control in Italy, which had been established during the reign of Justinian I, while simultaneously solidifying the Avars as the dominant power in the Carpathian Basin.

Byzantine emperors, including Justin II (r. 565-578), continued to pay annual tribute to the Avars as a means of preserving peace. These payments, typically made in gold solidi, served as a practical precaution to avoid direct military confrontation. However, the Avars used these funds to bolster their military and political power, which they later turned against the Byzantines.

One important negative outcome of the Avar-Byzantine alliance from the Byzantine perspective was the deterioration of diplomatic relations with the Göktürks. In 576, Türk Shad, the son of Istemi Khan, received a Byzantine diplomatic mission near the Aral Sea. During this encounter, he harshly condemned the Byzantine alliance with the Avars, expressing deep resentment over the Byzantines' attempts to forge a partnership with the Göktürks while simultaneously supporting their sworn enemies, the Avars. Türk Shad issued an ultimatum, declaring this dual policy unacceptable and a potential cause for war, warning that he could follow the same northern Black Sea route taken by the Avars to launch a campaign against Byzantium.[24]

The alliance with the Avars not only strained the Byzantine Empire's diplomatic relations with the Göktürks but also led to a deterioration in its relations with the Avars themselves. As the Avars grew more powerful, their demands for tribute increased, placing significant financial and political pressure on Byzantium.

When these demands escalated further, Emperor Justin II refused to meet them, leading to a sharp rise in tensions. In response, the Avars launched a series of raids into Byzantine territory. During the reign of Tiberius II (r. 574–582), the Avars besieged Sirmium in 580. Despite Byzantine attempts to resist their advance through diplomatic missions and diversionary military campaigns, Sirmium ultimately surrendered in 582, weakened by hunger and exhaustion.[25] The capture of

[24] Macartney, "On the Greek Sources for the History of the Turks in the Sixth Century", p.267; Gömeç, "Türk Tarihinde Avarlar ve Avar Meselesi", p.482-483.

[25] Curta stated that when the Avars conquered Sirmium, they supplied the starving population with food, deported the conquered city inhabitants to their own kaganate and settled them,

Sirmium dealt a significant blow to Byzantine control in the region, providing the Avars with a critical foothold south of the Danube and solidifying their dominance over the Carpathian Basin. This victory further emboldened the Avars, leading to subsequent raids and territorial expansion across the Balkans.[26]

The relationship between the Avars and the Byzantine Empire was also shaped by symbolic displays of power. While the Avars often used their military strength to pressure Byzantium into negotiations, Byzantine diplomacy sought to exploit internal divisions among the Avar elite. Within the Avar leadership, a peace-oriented faction led by Targitius advocated for resolving disputes with Byzantium through diplomacy rather than military confrontation.[27] Despite the influence of the pacifist faction, the pro-war faction prevailed under Emperor Maurice, and military conflicts took place along the Danube border. In addition, Byzantine strategies included the recruitment of double agents from within Avar envoy groups, as exemplified in the case of Kunimon during negotiations with General Austinus. These actions indicate deliberate efforts to sow discord and gather intelligence on Avar intentions. Finally, the Byzantines observed and exploited the fragmented nature of Avar society, including its organisation according to kinship and clans.

The foreign policy of the Avar Khaganate towards the Byzantine Empire was a mixture of military raids and negotiations. With the successful management of this process, the Avars secured their dominance in Central Europe and established a steppe state that would dominate the region for centuries to come.

The Peak of Avar Power and the Siege of Constantinople

By the late 5th and early 7th centuries, the Avar Khaganate reached its peak, consolidating control over the Carpathian Basin and establishing dominance across Central and South-eastern Europe. The Avars leveraged their highly mobile cavalry and efficient hierarchical organization to assert influence over the Slavic populations they had settled within their territory. These Slavic subjects typically served as agricultural producers and artisans under Avar over lordship.

refer to Florin Curta, *Southeastern Europe in the Middle Ages, 500-1250*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2006, p.65.

26 Ahmet Taşağıl, *Türk Bilgeleri, Devlet Ruhunu Mayalayan Liderler*, Timaş Publications, Istanbul 2021, p.74.

27 For Targitius' peace initiatives, see Kardaras, *Byzantium and the Avars,* p.25, 31, 33.



In addition to subjugating the Slavs, the Avars also dominated other groups like the Gepids and Lombards, skillfully exploiting internal political divisions among their rivals to expand their control. By the late 6th century, the Avar elite exerted influence over a vast region stretching from the Danube to the Elbe and beyond, making the Khaganate one of the most formidable powers in Europe. The Avars emerged as significant geopolitical rivals to both the Byzantine Empire and the Franks in terms of territory and influence.

A defining aspect of Avar expansion was their series of ambitious military campaigns targeting both Byzantium and neighbouring territories. The most audacious of these campaigns culminated in the joint Avar-Sasanian siege of Constantinople in 626. The Avar Khagan assembled a massive force, including his Slavic vassals, to assault the Byzantine capital. Utilizing siege equipment and cavalry, the Avars launched a series of assaults against the city's formidable walls.

Despite their numerical advantage and the coordinated efforts of the Sasanian forces attacking from the east, the siege ultimately failed. Byzantine naval superiority, the city's formidable defences, and internal disorganization within the Avar ranks contributed to the unsuccessful outcome of the campaign.[28] Another reason for the unsuccessful siege was rampant disease and famine.[29] These developments in the VI and VII centuries constitute the peak of the power of the Avars, manifested in territorial expansion and military initiatives. After this period, the Avars began to decline in power.

The Decline of Avar Power: Slavic and Bulgarian Revolts

The decline of the Avar Khaganate in the 8th and 9th centuries was marked by a series of internal uprisings by subjugated Slavic and Bulgar groups, coupled with increasing external pressures that severely weakened their dominance.[30] The

[28] The Byzantine naval fleet in the Bosphorus prevented the Avars and Sassanids from acting jointly, i.e. the lack of a navy was the main reason for the failure of this campaign, refer to Taşağıl, *Kök Tengri'nin Çocukları*, p.266.

[29] Şerif Baştav, *Bizans Tarihi, Kuruluşundan Yıkılışına Kadar*, Bilge Kültür Sanat, Istanbul 2021, p.85.

[30] The Ogurs, who would later be known as "Bulgars" meaning "mixed", joined Irnek under the rule of the European Huns when they migrated to the Northern Black Sea, and maintained their lives as three masses in the new area they came from, while the Nine Ogurs (Kara Bulgar) in the West established relations with Byzantium and then connected to the

Slavs increasingly sought independence, as evidenced by the uprising led by Samo in the early 7th century and subsequent revolts, signaling a growing desire to break free from Avar control.[31] Similarly, the Bulgars, under the leadership of figures like Kubrat and Asparukh, established their own polities along the borders of Avar territory, further eroding Avar dominance.[32] Kubrat's successful rebellion in the mid-7th century and the subsequent establishment of the Bulgar state north of the Danube dealt a significant blow to Avar authority in Central and South-eastern Europe, leading to a contraction of their sphere of influence. Displaced from the Black Sea region, the Avars were gradually pushed westward, eventually confining their presence primarily to the Pannonia Basin and the areas along the Tisa and Danube rivers.[33]

The Fall of the Avar Khaganate

The final blow to Avar supremacy was dealt in the late VIIIth century by the campaigns of the Frankish ruler Charlemagne (c. 768-814). By then, the Frankish Empire had emerged as the dominant power in Western Europe, and Charlemagne sought to extend his influence into Avar-held territory. In 791 Charlemagne launched a systematic military campaign against the Avars, targeting their strongholds in the Carpathian Basin.[34] At the end of the eight-year campaign, the Franks, with the help of their local Slavic allies, penetrated deep into Avar territory.[35]

The Avars' inability to mount an effective defence against Frankish incursions exposed the extent of their internal weaknesses. The deaths of key Avar leaders,

Avars coming from the East, see Ahmet Taşağıl, *İlk Türkler, Bozkırdan Dünyaya Yayılanlar*, Kronik Kitap, Istanbul 2021, p.79.

31 Rásonyi, states that the Slavs could become state founders only after passing the Avars' warfare school, see Rásonyi, *Macar Arkeolojisinde Hunlar, Avarlar, Macarlar*, p.15; also see Peter Golden, *An Introduction to the History of the Turkic Peoples*, Otto Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden 1992, p.112.

32 For a study on Kubrat's rebellion and the subsequent establishment of an independent Bulgarian State, see Ali Ahmetbeyoğlu, "Kubrat Han ve Büyük Bulgar Devleti'nin Kuruluşu", *Karadeniz Araştırmaları*, XIII/13 (2007), p.35-42.

33 Akdes N. Kurat, *IV-XVIII. Yüzyıllarda Karadeniz Kuzeyindeki Türk Kavimleri ve Devletleri*, Ankara 1972, p.29.

34 For a military analysis of Charlemagne's campaign against the Avars, see Jean-Claude Brunner, "Charlemagne Versus the Avars: A Reign at an End", *Medieval Warfare,* V/2, *The Campaigns of Charlemagne* (2015), p.27-34.

35 Samuel Szádecky-Kardoss, "Avarlar", trans. Ruşen Sezer, *Erken İç Asya Tarihi*, ed. Denis Sinor, İletişim Publications, Istanbul 2017, p.299.



including the Khagan, in major battles further destabilized the khaganate, leaving it vulnerable to both external attacks and internal dissent. By the early 9th century, the majority of the tribes remaining under Avar control had submitted to Frankish rule.[36] One of the consequences of this war was that the Avar rulers were forced to accept Christianity.[37] Although the Avar Khaganate collapsed militarily after Charlemagne's campaigns, it continued to exist in a weakened, symbolic form until 822. This year is often seen as the symbolic end of the Avar political order and identity.[38] After this point, their lands were divided between Franks, Slavs and Bulgarians. The eventual disintegration of the Avars underscored the inherent fragility of nomadic empires in the face of shifting political dynamics in Europe. The rise of centralized states such as the Frankish Empire, combined with internal rebellions and evolving alliances, rendered Avar dominance unsustainable. By the mid-9th century, the Avar Khaganate had ceased to exist as a political entity, leaving behind only a cultural legacy in the regions they once controlled.[39]

Archaeological Findings

Archaeological discoveries from the Carpathian Basin, the core region of the Avar Khaganate, indicate a conscious strategic methodology in the choice of settlement locations. The Avars established their settlements in proximity to rivers, floodplains, and high ground to exploit natural characteristics for defence, transportation, and resource availability. Settlements situated along the Danube and Tisza

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36 After Charlemagne's victory over the Avars, he was called "the whip of God", cf. Derek Wilson, *Charlemagne: Barbarian & Emperor*, Pimlico, London 2006, p.72. "It should be noted that the expression 'Flagellum Dei' ('Scourge/Scourge-rod of God') was originally applied to Attila, the ruler of the European Huns."

37 Togan described this event in 795 as the "mebdei of iniraz", i.e. the beginning of the collapse of the Avars, see A. Zeki Velidî Togan, *Umumî Türk Tarihine Giriş*, C. I: *En Eski Devirlerden 16. Asra Kadar*, İÜ.Ede.Fak. publications, Istanbul 1981, p.155.

38 On the acceptance of 822 as the date of the collapse of the Avar Khaganate see Martin Wihoda, "After Avars: The Beginning of the Ruling Power on the Eastern Fringe of Carolingian Empire" *Rulership in Medieval East Central Europe Power, Rituals and Legitimacy in Bohemia, Hungary and Poland*, ed. Grischa Vercamer, Dušan Zupka, Brill, Leiden & Boston 2022, p.79. Collins, states that the last time the Avars sent an embassy delegation to Louis I in 822, and that after this date they are no longer mentioned in the records., Roger Collins, *Charlemagne*, MacMillan, Hampshire & London, 1998, p.99.

39 Akdes Nimet Kurat, "Avarlar", ed. S. Acar, *Tarih İncelemeleri Dergisi*, XXVI/1 (2011), p.109.

rivers offer evidence of the organized exploitation of waterways for commercial and communication purposes. These settlements were generally located at the peripheries of regions susceptible to flooding, indicating the strategic methodologies employed by the Avars for territorial governance and their ability to sustain a stable social and economic foundation in the area. To date, roughly 125 Avar settlements have been located throughout contemporary Austria, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, the former Yugoslavia, and Romania.[40]

The Avars, initially a nomadic society based on a steppe warfare economy, began transitioning to a sedentary lifestyle from the mid-7th century onward. This transformation is clearly proven in archaeological records, where earlier tent-based, mobile dwellings were replaced by semi-subterranean houses and fortified settlements. Excavations at sites such as Kölked-Feketekapu have revealed furnaces, wells, and storage pits—features indicative of a settled way of life. This shift signifies a significant evolution in both their social and economic structures.[41]

The "Avar Age", which is dated approximately between 570-820 on the basis of archaeological findings, is analysed in three periods: Early (570-630), Middle (630-680) and Late (680-820) periods.[42] Although these periods correspond to the manifestation, rise, decline and fall of the Avars in Eastern Europe, this perio-

[40] 11 of these settlements are in Austria, 1 in the Czech Republic, 14 in Slovakia, 86 in Hungary, 8 in the former Yugoslavia and 5 in Romania. For a complete list of these settlements see Falko Daim, "Avars and Avar Archaeology: An Introduction", *Regna and Gentes.The Relationship between Late Antique and Early Medieval Peoples*, eds. Hans-Werner Goetz, Jorg Jarnut, Walter Pohl, Brill, Leiden & Boston, 2003, p.467. For an evaluation of 42 Avar settlements and finds in the Turkish literature, cf. F. Aysel Ilgın, *Avarlar, Avrupa'da 250 Yıllık Hakimiyetin İzleri*, İdeal Kültür Publishing, Istanbul 2023, p.79-117.

[41] Miklós Takács, "Settlement Archaeology of The Avar Age in the Southern Parts of The Carpathian Basin– Similarities and Differences", *Avars and Slavs, Two Sides of a Belt Strap End-Avars on the North and the South of the Khaganate, International Scientific Conference Held in Vinkovci 2020*, ed. A. R. Papeša, A. Dugonji, Arheološki Muzej u Zagrebu, Zagreb 2022, p.133-134, 138, 143-146. Balogh suggests a different reference for dating: (650/660–700/710) see Csilla Balogh, "A For the Early Avar Period (568–650/660), the Middle Avar Period (650/660–700/710), and the Late Avar Period (710/720–800/820), see Csilla Balogh, "Unknown Aspects of Avar–Turkic Relations in Light of Archaeological Finds: Migrations from the Eurasian Steppes to the Avar Khaganate," in Archaeological and Artistic Reflections and Interactions in Ancient Civilizations Rising from East to West, ed. İ. Çeşmeli and C. Berkant, Ankara: Nobel Publications, 2021, p. 104.

[42] Florin Curta, *The Long Sixth Century in Eastern Europe*, Brill, Leiden & Boston 2021, p.111. For a detailed evaluation of each of these periods, see Daim, "Avars and Avar Archaeology", p.463-529.



disation is based on material culture. In terms of material culture, the early period is characterised by rich burials containing mainly steppe-style objects. For example, lamellar armour, composite bows, stirrups and horse burials are characteristic.[43] This period also reflects the Avars' strong ties to Central Asian nomadic traditions. For instance, the nails, metal fittings, and decorative fasteners found in Avar graves, along with textile remnants and imprints on their surfaces, indicate that the coffins were wrapped in layers of fabric—a custom also observed in the burials of the Asian Huns.[44] A noteworthy element in the middle period is the decrease in elite burials. In this period, the richly equipped warrior graves of the Early Avar Period become rare.[45] This period also saw a shift from steppe nomadic burial traditions to more localised styles.[46] This also points to the increasing integration of the Avars with the Slavs and other local peoples.[47] The most unique feature of the Late Avar period in the field of material culture is that no distinguished Avar

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43 It was the Avars who brought the stirrup to Europe, see Şerif Baştav, "Avar İmparatorluğu", *Makaleler*, Vol.I, ed. E. S. Yalçın, E. Erdoğan, Berikan Yayınevi, Ankara 2005, p.495. Rásonyi also stated that the stirrup was not popular before the Avar period, and that the circular stirrups of the Avar period were particularly characterised by their circular shape, see Rásonyi, *Macar Arkeolojisinde Hunlar, Avarlar, Macarlar*, p.17.

44 Zsófia Básti, "Funerary Textiles in The Avar Period", *Hungarian Archaeology*, vol. XI/4 (2022), p.28-34.

45 For an evaluation of the findings from sites such as Kunbábony, Kunpeszér, Kunszállás, Rákóczifalva in the region between the Danube and Tisa Rivers, where the graves of the Avar elite are denser, Guido Alberto Gnecchi-Ruscone, Zsófia Rácz, Levente Samu, vd. "Network of Large Pedigrees Reveals Social Practices of Avar Communities", *Nature*, vol. DCXXIX (2024), p.377. In this collective archaeo-genetic study, a group of scholars led by Gnecchi-Ruscone, based on DNA analyses of 424 individuals from four Avar cemeteries in Hungary, found evidence of kinship relations in the Avar period and the existence of the practice of levirate in the Old Turkic tribes.

46 On the fact that the types of graves in Avar settlements indicate that the Avars mixed with other peoples over time, cf. István Erdélyi, "Avarlar", trans. K. Yıldırım, *Türk Dünyası İncelemeleri Dergisi*, XIII/2 (2013), p.341.

47 This kind of integration seen in archaeological objects was also present in many other areas. For example, of the 17200 Avar soldiers captured by the Byzantines in 600, only three thousand were Turks, while the remaining eight thousand were Slavs and four thousand were Gepids, see Taşağıl, *Kök Tengri'nin Çocukları*, p.267. From a physical anthropological point of view, there is also a distinction between "Avars" and "Avar population", cf. Egemen Çağrı Mızrak, *Bozkır Kavimleri, M.Ö. VII. Yüzyıldan M.S.VI. Yüzyılın Ortalarına Kadar Batı Türkistan ve Kuzey Hindistan'da Bozkırlılar*, Ötüken Publications, Istanbul 2017, p.227. Pohl is of the opinion that this integration can be traced back to Csákberény-Ormondpuszta between Budapest and Lake Balaton, see Pohl, *The Avars,* p.103.

graves[48] have been found from this period, and the archaeological remains, especially in pottery, weapons and burial practices, are a blend of Avar, Slavic and Byzantine influences.[49]

The transition to sedentary life coincided with wider changes in Avar society, including increased agricultural production, local craftsmanship and the integration of subjugated peoples such as the Slavs.[50] The Avars, adopting and adapting techniques from neighbouring cultures, developed a hybrid economic system that blended nomadic traditions with agricultural and artisanal practices. This evolution not only enabled the Avars to maintain their dominance in the Carpathian Basin but also fostered the development of a more complex socio-political structure.

An important subject from an archaeological perspective is their burial practices. Existing archaeological evidence suggests that the Avars' funerary customs provide valuable insights into their social hierarchy and cultural dynamics.[51] Elite graves, which are typically richly adorned and situated in prominent locations within cemeteries, stand in stark contrast to those of ordinary individuals. The tombs of Avar nobility, including Khagans and other high-ranking figures, often contain ostentatious items that emphasize their high status and wealth, such as gold ornaments, intricately crafted belt buckles, and imported luxury goods.[52] These tombs often contained horses or horse-related artefacts, symbolising the prestige and martial prowess associated with the Avar elite. It has been ascertained that in Avar tombs the dead

48 Szádecky-Kardoss, "Avarlar", p.307.

49 Although it is known that the Avars disappeared from historical sources upon the collapse of the Kaganate, the fate of the local population buried in the Avar style in the VIIIth century and the continuity between this population and the new population groups in IXth century Pannonia are being investigated in a project by Pohl, Krause, Vida and Geary, cf. Walter Pohl, Johannes Krause, Tivadar Vida, Patrick Geary, "Integrating Genetic, Archaeological, and Historical Perspectives on Eastern Central Europe, 400-900 AD: Brief Description of the ERC Synergy Grant – HistoGenes 856453", *Historical Studies on Central Europe*, vol. I/1 (2021), p.213-228.

50 Roberto, evaluating archaeological findings from the second half of the VIIth century, argues that the transition to agricultural life increased after the defeat of the siege of Constantinople, cf. Umberto Roberto, "Step Halkları ve Akdeniz Bölgesi: Hunlar, Avarlar ve Bulgarlar", *Ortaçağ: Barbarlar, Hıristiyanlar, Müslümanlar*, haz. Umberto Eco, trans. Leyla Tonguç Basmacı, Alfa, Istanbul 2014, p.84.

51 Florin Curta, "A Social History of the Avars: Historical and Archaeological Perspectives", *History Compass*., (2021); e12697, s.3.

52 The similarities of Avar objects found in Hungary with objects found in Ordos, on the great bend of the Yellow River, have been taken as an indication of the continuity of steppe civilisation, cf. René Grousset, *Stepler İmparatorluğu, Attilâ, Cengiz Han, Timur*, trans. Halil İnalcık, Türk Tarih Kurumu, Ankara 2020, p.188.



were placed facing east.[53] Likewise, at the Szegvár-Oromdűlõ and Tiszántúl sites, skulls shaped like those of the European Huns were found, indicating that a tradition common among the Huns continued to a certain extent among the Avars.[54]

In contrast, common graves were generally simpler, containing fewer and less elaborate grave goods. While modest, these burials provide valuable insights into the daily lives and cultural practices of the broader Avar population. For instance, the tools, pottery, and simple jewelry found in these graves highlight the material culture and economic roles of non-elite Avars. The stark differences between elite and common burials underscore the highly stratified nature of Avar society, where the nobility maintained their status through displays of wealth and power even in death. Artifacts recovered from Avar graves provide critical insights into the cultural and economic exchanges within the Avar Khaganate. Weapons such as swords, spears, and bows, typically found in elite burials, reflect the warrior ethos of Avar society and the enduring influence of steppe traditions. Additionally, ornate items like gilded belt fittings adorned with motifs borrowed from Byzantine and Sasanian art demonstrate the Avars' interactions with neighbouring cultures and their adaptation of foreign artistic styles.

Items found in graves also highlight the extensive trade networks maintained by the Avars. Imported items such as Byzantine gold coins, silk fabrics, and glassware discovered in Avar cemeteries indicate active participation in both regional and long-distance trade. Similarly, the presence of Slavic-style pottery and jewellery in some graves points to cultural exchange with subjugated and neighbouring groups.

Material Culture and Economics

The economy of the Avar Khaganate was based on its ability to exploit natural resources and control regional trade networks. Salt, a critical commodity for conservation and trade, was extracted from mines in its territory and salt deposits in its rivers. Control over these resources gave the Avars a significant economic advantage, favouring both internal stability and foreign trade relations.[55]

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[53] László Rásonyi, *Tarihte Türklük*, trans. H. Z. Koşay, T. Andaç, N. Uğurlu, Örgün Publishers, Istanbul 2008, p.128.

[54] In particular, excavations at the Szegvár-Oromdűlõ settlement in Szegvár-Oromdűlõ revealed a total of 32 female skulls in [532] graves from the Early Avar period, indicating that this custom continued among the female population, see Gülay Hoştaş, "Doğu Avrupa Türk Tarihinin Arkeolojik İmzası: Kemik Dönüşümü ve Deformasyonu", *Genel Türk Tarihi Araştırmaları Dergisi*, VI/12 (2024), 315-316.

[55] Florin Curta, attempting to outline the social history of the Avars, notes that in this context, due to the scarcity of written sources, one must rely heavily on archaeological evidence.

Metallurgy was an important element of the Avar economy. Skilled Avar artisans produced finely crafted items such as weapons, tools and ornate belt buckles, often decorated with intricate steppe motifs or influenced by neighbouring Byzantine and Sasanian styles.[56] These items were not only used within the Avar territory, but also served as valuable trade goods. The quality of Avar metallurgy made the Khaganate a major producer of high-status items and further integrated its economic system into regional commercial systems.[57]

Trade facilitated the exchange of goods between the Avars and their neighbours. Byzantine gold coins, silk, and luxury items often flowed into Avar-controlled

Early interpretations, influenced by Gyula László's model, portrayed Avar society in a hierarchical structure of lords, middle class and commoners derived from burial practices and grave goods, but this simple framework has been challenged by modern archaeological techniques and interpretations. Recent analyses suggest that burial customs often reflect symbolic representations of status rather than strict social roles. In this context, artefacts previously considered to be indicative of rank, such as weapons and belt sets, are now seen as part of a ritualised idealisation of the social order, and not as direct signs of wealth or power. Gender and age played important roles in shaping the Avar social fabric. Burial practices show that there are distinct differences between men, women and children. While the graves of women typically included artefacts indicative of wealth and reflective of familial status, the graves of children sometimes incorporated elements associated with adult roles, which may imply the existence of rites of passage. Bio-archaeological research has further uncovered disparities in health and labour between the sexes: indicators of nutritional deficiencies were noted in women, while men exhibited evidence of physical strain. These results suggest that social roles were intricately linked with gender-specific expectations and familial relationships, highlighting a multifaceted social structure that transcends previously postulated simplistic hierarchies. Economic activities and production processes within Avar society provide additional insights into these social dynamics. Craft production, particularly in the field of metalworking, was intimately associated with members of the elite household, as demonstrated by artefacts discovered in specific burial sites. Instead of depending on distinct specialist artisans, the Avar elite seem to have been actively involved in production, indicating the presence of an integrated economic system. Furthermore, the distribution and utilization of grave goods, including weapons and tools, mirror the social values and ideals of the Avar society. These practices emphasize the significance of symbolic representation in preserving social cohesion and conveying status during times of political and social transformation. Curta posits that these findings illustrate a dynamic and adaptive society wherein identities were formulated and articulated through material culture and ritualistic practices. Refer to Curta, "A Social History of the Avars", p.1-19.

56 Rásonyi, *Macar Arkeolojisinde Hunlar, Avarlar, Macarlar*, p.18.

57 For a study of Avar metallurgy see. Béla Török, Árpád Kovács, Péter Barkóczy & Frigyes Szücsi. "Tradecraft of the Avars' Metalworking – Manufacturing of Iron Axes and a Special Multimetallic Method used for Belt Accessories", *STAR: Science and Technology of Archaeological Research*, III/3 (2017), p.1-12.



territories as tribute or through commerce, while Avar-made goods spread across Central and Eastern Europe. This pattern reflects the active role of the Avars in both commercial and cultural exchanges.[58]

The Avars skilfully adapted and reused remnants of Roman and Byzantine infrastructure to develop their economic and administrative systems. Settlements and trade routes were often established near ancient Roman roads and fortifications, providing efficient transport networks and strategic advantages. These links enabled the movement of goods, troops and information over a wide area.

Byzantine canals, bridges, and agricultural lands were similarly incorporated into Avar territory. The Khaganate utilized these resources for economic production, ensuring a steady supply of goods to sustain its settled populations and military forces. The strategic use of existing infrastructure to integrate trade and resource extraction highlights the complexity of Avar material culture and economy. This capacity for adaptation enabled the Khaganate to maintain its dominance and engage with neighbouring powers, solidifying its role as a key player in the economic landscape of Early Medieval Europe.

Avar Culture and Art

In the cultural identity of the Avars, traces of the transition from nomadism to a "more" settled way of life is apparent.[59] Early Avar settlements at first consisted of temporary structures such as yurts or tents, symbolising their nomadic steppe origins and highly mobile lifestyle. These lightweight dwellings were well-suited for the early phases of rapid territorial expansion and the war-based economy that characterized the early Khaganate. As the Avar polity stabilized and integrated into the Carpathian Basin, its housing and settlement patterns underwent a marked transformation. Archaeological evidence indicates a gradual transition towards more permanent structures, including semi-subterranean dwellings typically clustered in organized villages. By the seventh century, some Avar settlements featured defensive elements like ditches and palisades, reflecting the increasing need to protect territory and defend against external threats. These fortified habitations

58 Pohl, *The Avars,* p.250-254.

59 On the evolution of the Avars from a nomadic economy to a semi-nomadic-semi-sedentary economy see Ünal Eryılmaz, "Avar Kağanlığı'nın İktisadi Tarihi", *Ömer Halisdemir Üniversitesi İİBF Dergis*i, XIV/3 (2021), p.1103.

not only symbolized the shift towards a more settled lifestyle but also facilitated the development of a more structured and complex society.

The Avars were also renowned for their metalworking skills, producing intricately decorated items such as belt buckles, horse harness fittings, and weapons that demonstrated both technical skill and aesthetic sophistication. Their designs often incorporated motifs symbolic of power, prestige, and cultural identity, drawing on steppe artistic traditions. This included geometric patterns, animal imagery, and the distinctive "Animal Style" common across the Eurasian steppe, alongside botanical motifs like palmettes and lotuses.[60] Mythological scenes, human and animal figures, and hunting imagery also feature prominently in Avar decorative art.In addition to personal adornment, Avar metalwork served practical purposes in both daily life and warfare. Ornamental elements on items like stirrups and bridles not only enhanced the functionality of these tools but also acted as markers of status and wealth. These objects were highly sought after in trade and influenced artistic traditions in neighbouring cultures.[61]

Avar artistic production reflects a dynamic exchange with neighbouring cultures, particularly the Byzantines and Slavs. Byzantine influence is evident in the use of gold and enamel techniques, as well as in the incorporation of Christian iconography into certain Avar designs. These elements suggest direct contact with Byzantine craftsmen and the assimilation of luxury goods through trade or tribute, highlighting the permeability of cultural boundaries and the Avars' ability to integrate foreign artistic traditions into their own material culture.[62]

Avar styles also influenced the material culture of neighbouring groups. Slavic pottery, jewellery and even burial customs display Avar-inspired designs, demonstrating the role of the Kaganate as a cultural mediator.[63] Therefore, a mutual cultural interaction rather than a unilateral interaction existed.

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60 Taşağıl, *Kök Tengri'nin Çocukları,* p.270.

61 On the use of metal ornaments on horse equipment to indicate the status and wealth of the Avar elite, see Karadas, *Byzantium and the Avars,* p.104-105.

62 Ögel is of the opinion that these influences travelled to Southern Russia through Byzantium via the Crimea and came to Hungary with the Avars, see Bahaeddin Ögel, *İslamiyet'ten Önce Türk Kültür Tarihi, Orta Asya Kaynak Buluntularına Göre*, Türk Tarih Kurumu, Ankara 2003, p.124.

63 Daim has discussed the manifestation of Avar artistic motifs in Slavic jewellery and grave goods, cf. Daim, "Avars and Avar Archaeology: An Introduction", p.475-480. On the grave goods of the Avar elite and the changes in burial practices due to Avar cultural interactions,



The Language of the Avars

The Avars preserved many aspects of their steppe heritage in their religious practices, including Shamanistic rituals and respect for the natural elements.[64]

Burial practices such as the burial of horses alongside warriors reflect the belief that a warrior's status and possessions would accompany them into the afterlife. This tradition, along with the frequent depiction of animals in Avar art and artefacts, underscores the spiritual significance of their nomadic heritage. By the late 8th and early 9th centuries, Christian influences began to penetrate Avar society, particularly among the elite. This transformation coincided with increased interactions with the Byzantine Empire and the Christian campaigns led by Charlemagne. Archaeological findings, including crosses and other Christian symbols in some Avar graves, indicate that Christianity, though limited in its reach, had begun to leave a noticeable mark on Avar cultural and religious practices.[65]

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cf. Mărginean, Florin, Mihály Huba K. Hőgyes, Sarah Peter, Erwin Gáll, "The Outskirts of the Khagans": An Overview of the Avar Age Burial Sites near Pecica", *Avars and Slavs, Two Sides of a Belt Strap End-Avars on the North and the South of the Khaganate, Proceedings of the International Scientific Conference Held in Vinkovci 2020,* eds.Anita Rapan Papeša, Anita Dugonji, Arheološki Muzej u Zagrebu, Zagreb 2022, p.240-255. For Avar influences on Slavic pottery based on material from excavations in Bulgaria and Romania, cf. Florin Curta, *Southeastern Europe in the Middle Ages, 500-1250*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2006, p.40-42. On the Avar influences on the Slavic ceramics in the burial grounds, cf. Lyudmila Doncheva-Petkova, "Ethnic Changes in Present-Day Bulgaria in the 6th–9th Centuries", *Avars, Bulgars and Magyars on the Middle and Lower Danube, Proceedings of the Bulgarian-Hungarian Meeting, Sofia, May 27-28, 2009*, ed. Lyudmila Doncheva-Pektova, Csilla Balogh, Attila Türk, Archaeolingua, Budapeşte 2014, p.14-18. For a discussion of Avar-style ceramic production methods in Slavic settlements, cf. Ismailzade, "The Influence of the Avar Khanate on the Ethno-political Situation in South-Eastern Europe", p.5-8.

64 Archaeological objects of the Avars provide direct evidence of shamanic beliefs. The most prominent example is a bone jar found at Mokrin with a world mountain, a world pillar, and a nine-branched tree of life on top of them, cf. Szádecky-Kardoss, "Avarlar", p.309-310.

65 For Christian influences on Avar culture, see Ádám Bollók, "Christians, Christianity, and the 'Northern Barbarians' in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages," in From Steppe to Mediterranean: Peoples, Cultures, Integration, ed. C. Ebanista and M. Rotili, Guida Editori, Naples 2017, p. 430. For a discussion regarding the presence of Christian symbols and the incorporation of Byzantine-influenced cross motifs in elite burials from the late eighth century in Avar burial communities, refer to Falko Daim, "Byzantine Belt Ornaments of the 7th and 8th Centuries in Avar Contexts," in Intelligible Beauty. Recent Research on Byzantine Jewellery, edited by Christopher Entwistle and Noël Adams, British Museum Research Publication, London 2010, pp. 66-67.

This integration of Christian elements was not homogenous, and many Avars probably blended their traditional beliefs with new influences. However, this points to a broader cultural transformation in the last years of the Khaganate, reflecting efforts to adapt to the changing political and cultural dynamics of early medieval Europe.

The Language of the Avars

Based on the available titles and the limited number of known names, it is likely that the Avars spoke a Turkic dialect related to the Ogur branch, similar to the Bulgars and Khazars. This hypothesis is supported by the presence of distinctly Turkic titles such as "khagan", "han", "kapkan", "tudun", "tarkan" and "khatun" in contemporary Latin Western European sources and medieval Byzantine Greek texts, indicating a strong linguistic and cultural connection to the Turkic-speaking world.[66] Similarly, based on the linguistic studies of János Harmatta and Gyula Németh on the Avar language, titles such as qagan, qatun, tarqan, tudun, and yuguruš, as well as personal names like Bayan, Qamsavčï, Kök, and Solaq, can all be clearly interpreted within the context of Turkic languages.[67] In addition to the information at hand, Harmatta, who analysed the inscriptions on the Jánoshid needle, found the letters of the Orkhon-Yenisey carved script, and revealed that these inscriptions were written in the ancient Turkic language.[68] Taking into account that the inscription on the Nagyszentmiklós vessel includes some Greek letters within an Old Turkic script, it has been suggested that the Avar elite used Old Turkic and, as a result of their interactions with Byzantium, were also able to read Medieval Greek.[69] Runic inscriptions were found on an arch end and two metal plates recovered from the Keszthely Fenekpuszta site.[70] All of the Avars' titles are of Turkic

[66] Tolga Ersoy, "Avarlar", *Türk Devletleri Tarih ve Kültür Atlası (Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nin 100. Yılına Armağan*), haz. A. Özcan, F. Başar, Türk Kültürüne Hizmet Vakfı, Istanbul 2022, p.68; Erdélyi, "Avarlar", p.343.

[67] János Harmatta, *Avarların Dili Sorununa Dair-Doğu Avrupa'da Türk Oyma Yazılı Kitabeler*, trans. Hicran Akın, Atatürk Kültür Merkezi Başkanlığı Publications, Ankara 1999, p.1-2.

[68] Harmatta, p.27.

[69] András Róna-Tas, "The Problems of the East-European Scripts with Special Regards to the Newly Found Inscription of Szarvas", *Popoli delle steppe: Unni, Avari, Ungari*, vol. II (Settimane di studio del CISAM, XXXV), Spoleto: Presso la Sede del. Centro, 1988, p.129.

[70] Ilgın, *Avarlar*, p.81.



origin, and the name "Bayan" is not Mongolian as sometimes claimed, but rather derived from the Turkic root "Bay" meaning "rich." This name was used not only by the Mongols but also by Bulgar Turks.[71]

The Impact of the Avars on Turkish and World History

The Avars played a significant part in shaping the political landscape of Early Medieval Europe through their interactions with major powers such as the Byzantines, Franks, and various Slavic groups. The relationship between the Avar Khaganate and the Byzantine Empire was characterized by a complex blend of diplomacy and warfare. While the Byzantines paid substantial tributes to secure peace and alliances, the Avars frequently launched raids into Byzantine territories. The famous siege of Constantinople in 626 stands out as a pivotal campaign. Similarly, their relations with the Franks during Charlemagne's era culminated in a series of military campaigns that eventually led to the decline of the Avars by the late 8th century. The Avars also exerted significant influence over the Slavs, incorporating them as subjected groups, allies, and auxiliary forces. These multifaceted interactions not only shaped the power dynamics within the Avar Khaganate but also impacted the broader geopolitical environment of the period. The Avars played an instrumental role in the development of Early Medieval Europe's geopolitical landscape, acting as both a unifying force and a disruptive element across Central and South-eastern Europe. Their dominance in the Carpathian Basin created a buffer zone between the Byzantine Empire and the rising powers of Western Europe, such as the Franks. By controlling critical trade routes and influencing the political landscape through warfare and diplomacy, the Avars contributed to the fragmentation and reconfiguration of regional powers. Their interactions and relationships with the Slavs, Gepids, and Bulgars facilitated the emergence of new political entities and shaped the balance of power during this transformative period.

Moreover, the Avars significantly impacted Slavic migrations and settlements, acting both as a driving force and a structural framework for the spread of Slavic groups throughout Central and South-eastern Europe. By incorporating Slavs into their military and economic systems, the Avars facilitated their expansion into new territories. At the same time, the role of Slavs as auxiliary troops in Avar campaigns,

[71] Taşağıl, *Kök Tengri'nin Çocukları*, p.263.

alongside their rebellions against Avar dominance, laid the groundwork for the formation of independent Slavic political structures.

The Avars left an indelible mark on the cultural and political identities of South-eastern Europe. Their interactions with the Byzantines, Slavs, and other neighbouring groups led to a synthesis of traditions evident in material culture, settlement patterns, and administrative structures. Although their political dominance waned over time, the cultural exchanges they facilitated laid the foundation for the region's long-term development and influenced the formation of Early Medieval states such as Bulgaria and Croatia.

Undoubtedly, the significance of the Avars in the history of Eastern European Turks stems from their status as a steppe state established in the same region after the European Huns. Following the Avars, many cultural practices rooted in steppe traditions continued to persist in this area, with the presence of Turkic elements and tribes documented almost every century up to the Ottoman period.

One of the most important contributions of the Avars to world history was their introduction and dissemination of the stirrup in Europe. This innovation revolutionized cavalry warfare by providing riders with greater stability, enabling more effective use of weapons such as lances.[72] The military application of the stirrup was rapidly adopted by neighbouring powers, fundamentally transforming medieval warfare and increasing the strategic importance of cavalry.

The Avars played a significant role in the spread of material culture throughout Central and South-eastern Europe. The ornate metalwork, horse equipment, and weapons found in Avar graves and settlements clearly demonstrate the extent of their influence. Through trade, tribute, and conquest, Avar-made products and motifs disseminated widely, blending steppe traditions with Byzantine, Slavic, and local European styles. This cultural exchange fostered a dynamic environment, establishing the Avars as key intermediaries within the cultural and economic networks of the Early Middle Ages.

[72] For a discussion of the views of Littauer, A. D. H. Bivar, and Albert Dien on this issue, see. James L. Suhr, Riding Astride and the Proto-Stirrup, (Unpublished Master's Thesis), Norwich University 2020, pp.2-3.



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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: List of Archaeological Sites Attributed to the Avars

A comprehensive list of 125 archaeological sites and settlements attributed to the Avars has been compiled by Falko Daim.* Among these settlements, 11 are located in Austria, 1 in the Czech Republic, 14 in Slovakia, 8 in the former Yugoslavia, and 5 in Romania. A total of 86 Avar settlements are situated in Hungary. Consequently, the richest concentration of Avar material culture is found in Hungary. However, due to factors such as migration and trade, Avar artifacts can also be found in surrounding regions beyond these settlements. Nevertheless, this list provides valuable information regarding the geography where Avar settlements were most densely concentrated and where their dominance was sustained.

Austria
1. Edelstal (Hungarian: Nemesvölgy)
2. Frohsdorf
3. Leobersdorf
4. Mistelbach
5. Mödling
6. Münchendorf
7. Sommerein
8. Vienna 11 – Csokorgasse
9. Vienna 23 – Liesing
10. Zillingtal
11. Zwölfaxing

Czech Republic
12. Dolní Dunajovice

Slovakia
13. Blatnica
14. Čataj
15. Cífer Pác
16. Devínska Nová Ves
17. Holiare
18. Komarno
19. Moravský Ján
20. Nové Zámky
21. Šebastovce
22. Štúrovo
23. Záhorská Bystrica
24. Želovce
25. Zemiansky Vrbovok
26. Zitavská Tôň

Hungary
27. Abony
28. Alattyán
29. Bócsa
30. Boldog
31. Bóly
32. Budakalász – Dunapart
33. Budapest – Csepel
34. Budapest – Farkasrét
35. Cibakháza
36. Cikó
37. Csákberény
38. Csanytelek
39. Csengele
40. Deszk
41. Dunaújváros
42. Egerág
43. Előszállás
44. Gátér
45. Gyód
46. Győr – Téglavető – dűlő
47. Hajdúdorog



48. Halimba
49. Hird
50. Hódmezővásárhely
51. Hortobágy – Árkus
52. Igar
53. Inota
54. Iváncsa
55. Jánoshida
56. Jutas
57. Káptalantóti
58. Kecel
59. Kecskemét
60. Keszthely
61. Keszthely – Fenékpuszta
62. Kisköre
63. Kiskőrös
64. Kiszombor
65. Kölked – Feketekapu
66. Környe
67. Kunbábony
68. Kunhegyes – Bánhalma
69. Kunmadaras
70. Kunszentmárton
71. Lébény
72. Mártély
73. Mezőberény
74. Mosonszentjános
75. Nagyharsány
76. Nagypall
77. Ozora – Tótipuszta
78. Pápa
79. Pécs
80. Pilismarót
81. Pókaszepetk
82. Regöly
83. Romonya (= Ellend)
84. Solymár
85. Szarvas
86. Szebény
87. Szeged – Átokháza
88. Szeged – Fehértó
89. Szeged – Kundomb
90. Szeged – Makkoserdő
91. Szegvár – Oromdűlő
92. Szegvár – Sápoldal
93. Székkutas
94. Szekszárd – Bogyiszlói út
95. Szekszárd – Mocfacsárda
96. Szentes – Berekhát
97. Szentes – Kaján
98. Szentes – Lapistó
99. Szentes – Nagyhegy
100. Táp
101. Tápe
102. Tiszafüred – Majoros
103. Tolnanémedi
104. Toponár
105. Törökbálint
106. Üllő
107. Ürbőpuszta
108. Várpalota
109. Vasasszonyfa
110. Zalakomár
111. Zamárdi
112. Závod

Former Yugoslavia

113. Aradac (Hungarian: Aradka)
114. Brodski Drenovac
115. Čadjavica (Hungarian: Csadjavica)
116. Čelarevo
117. Čoka (Hungarian: Csóka)
118. Novi Banovci
119. Pančevo
120. Zmajevac (Hungarian: Vörösmart)

Romania

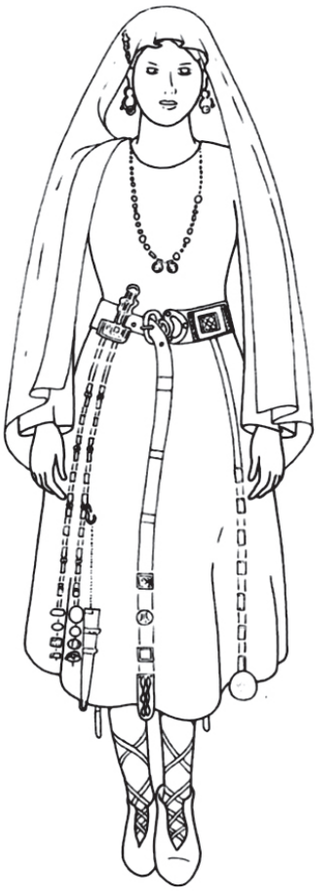
121. Band (Hungarian: Mezőbánd)
122. Felnac (Hungarian: Fönlak)
123. Sînpetru German (Hungarian: Németszentpéter)
124. Sînnicolau Mare (Hungarian: Nagyszentmiklós)
125. Zalău (Hungarian: Zilah)

Appendix 2: Map of Avar archaeological sites



Source: Daim, "Avars and Avar Archaeology: An Introduction", p.466.

Appendix 3: Redesign of the garment of a noble Avar woman from grave number 85 in Cemetery B at Kölked-Feketekapu



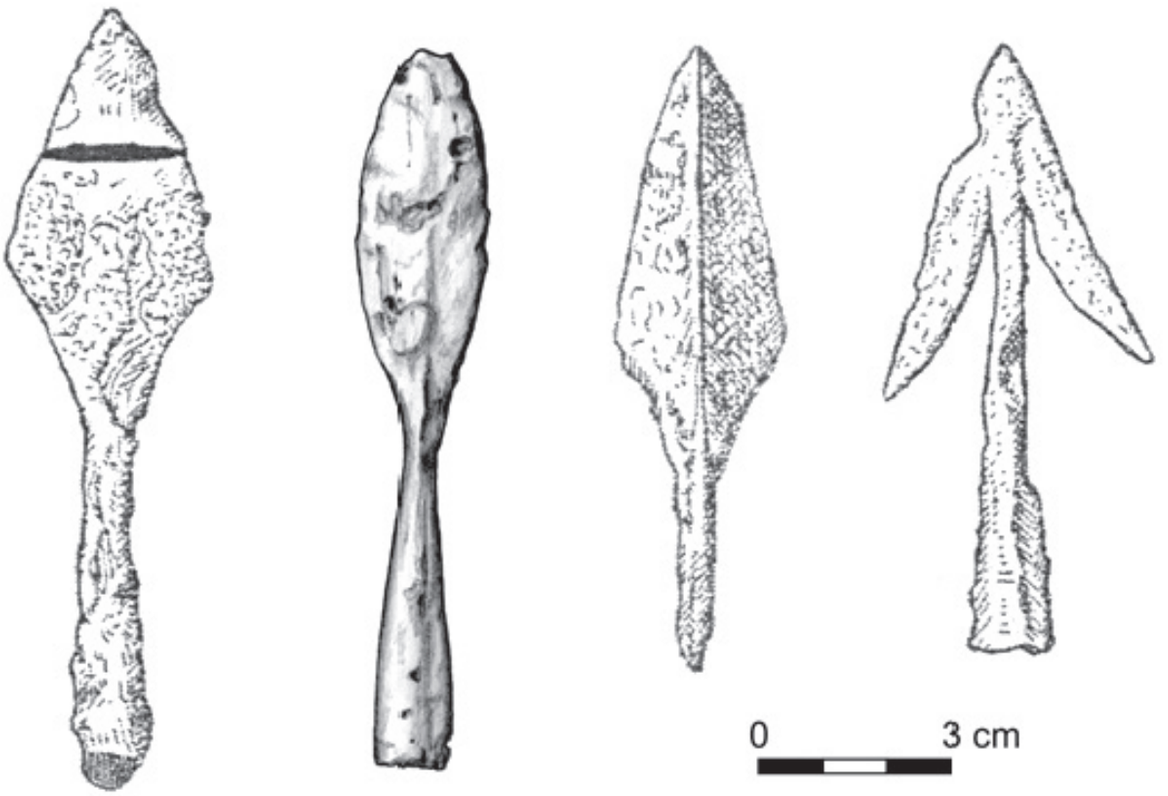
Source: Kardaras, *Byzantium and the Avars*, p.192.

Appendix 4: Bronze jacket clasp from the Late Avar Period, found in female grave number 144 at the Mödling Cemetery in Austria; scale 2:1.



Source: Daim, "Avars and Avar Archaeology: An Introduction", p.558.

Appendix 5: Typological classification of Avar arrowheads found in Late Period row grave cemeteries in Transylvania.



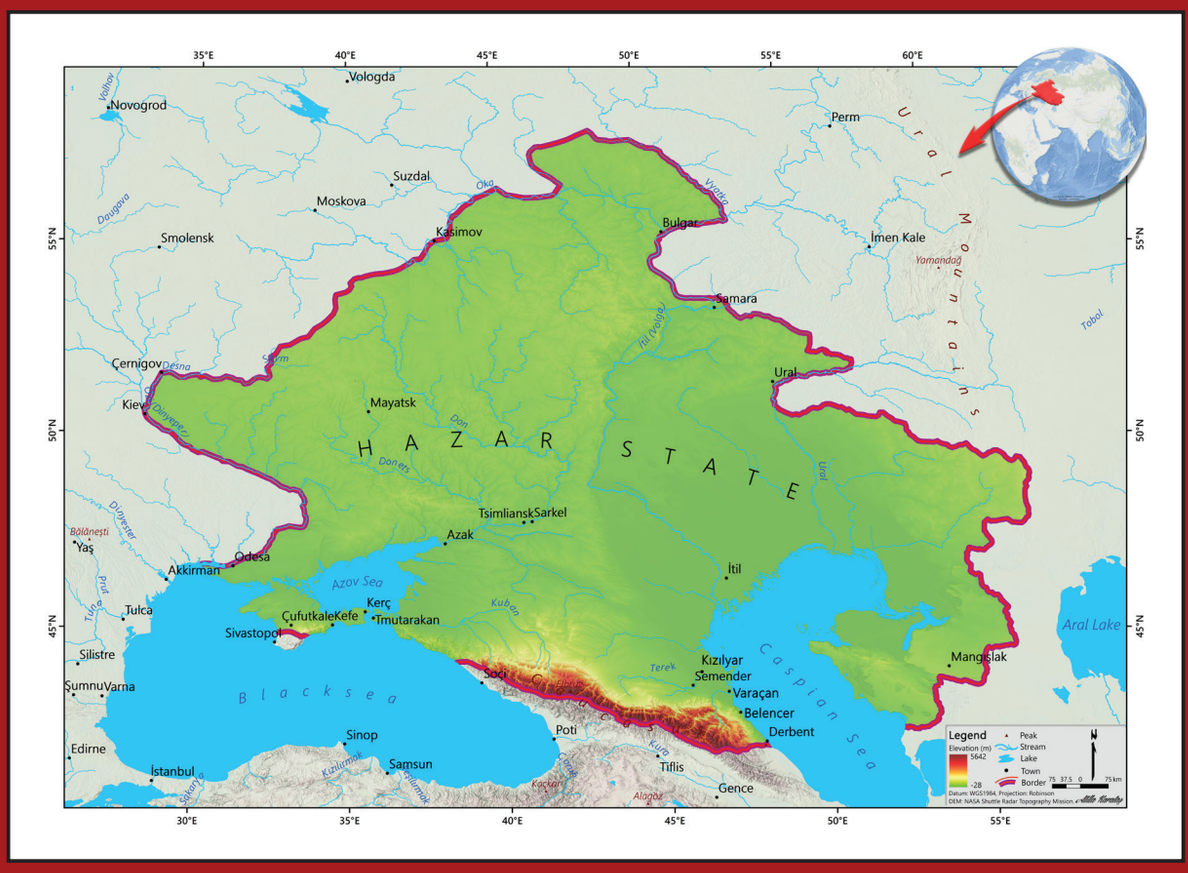
Source: Alpár Dobos, "Weapons and weapon depositions in the late row-grave cemeteries in Transylvania", *Warriors, Weapons, and Harness from the 5th–10th Centuries in the Carpathian Basin*, ed. Călin Cosma, Mega Publishing House Cluj, Napoca 2015, p.69.

Appendix 6: Circular-shaped Avar stirrup



Source: Erwin Gáll, *At the Periphery of the Avar Core Region, 6th–8th Century Burial Sites near Nădlac (The Pecica–Nădlac Motorway Rescue Excavations)*, Éditions L'Harmattan, Paris & Budapest 2017, p.478.

The Khazar State



Source: Atilla Karataş Collection



THE KHAZAR STATE

(630-965)

Dinçer KOÇ*

The Khazar Khaganate was a Turkish state that left a deep impression on Eastern European history during the 7th century to the 10th century. The Khazar Khaganate was situated between the Caspian Sea and the Black Sea. After the Caliphate made inroads into Azerbaijan and Irmîniyye, until Derbend in the south, the Caucasus Mountains served as a border. The Khazar Kaganate stretched northward to the middle stream of Idyll where it united with the mouth of Kama; its sphere of influence therefore ran from the steppes north of the Black Sea all the way to Kiev. Though initially, this great immersion placed its main centre of gravity along Terek, from half-way through the 8th century onwards it spread to Yarık, İdil, Don and Kuban river basins thereby controlling important trade routes.[1]

The Khazar lands brought under one authority diverse peoples surrounding the Caspian and Volga River, the Northern Caucasus, the steppe between Don and Dnieper River, and also on the Crimean Peninsula—all these at times. The Khazar lands were administratively split up into three big regions within this vast

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1 Ahmet Taşağıl, "Hazarlar", *DİA*, Vol. 17, pp.116-117.

geography: The first region was Hawalis running along the lower course of the Volga River, and Itil (Hamlic) was the capital of the state. This city was founded on both banks of the Volga River; Sarighshen (Hazaran/Khaganbalik) and its western side served as an administrative and religious centre while Itil (Etil) on its eastern side was where Muslims lived. This region gained importance as a centre for trade. Its governor was called a "tarhan (as tarkan)," meaning "prince."[2] Following their defeat at the hands of the Arabs in the Caucasus in the year 104 AH (722–723 CE), the Khazars took the decision to relocate their capital from Semender to this region.[3] The second region was called Semender, and stretched along the Terek River in the Northern Caucasus and its governor came from the Barc tribe of the Turks. The third region was Sarkel, situated along the lower course of the Don River. This area is known to have been the main customs centre of the Khazars and the official in charge of its administration was known as Sahib al-Hazar.

In addition to the above territories, there were seven regions or communities ruled by subordinate princes bearing the title "ilteber": Hotzig whose center was Phullai between Suğdak and Theodosia on the coast; the ancient Hun Kingdom centered at Belencer (Armenian Varaçan) north of Derbend in the Sulak River basin; Onogur along the lower course of Kuma River; Magyars near Donets in 9th century; Bulgars in middle course of Volga where it meets Kama; Suvars in middle course of Volga; Burtas between Volga Bulgars and Khazars. Also, the Khazars held towns on the upper shore of the Black Sea known for their trade value, like Kerson, Phanagoria, Tamatarha (Samkarç), Bosphorus, and Doros, the heart of Crimean Gothia. These towns were mostly run by Khazar leaders with names such as "Babağuk," "Fisherman," and Tudun; they had to collect taxes and keep the order.[4] There were also communities who it is estimated in the 9th century,

[2] Omeljan Pritsak, "Hazar Hakanlığı'nın Museviliğe Geçişi", trans. A. Tayfun Özcan, *Karadeniz Araştırmaları*, XIII/13 (March 2007), p.16. In relation to İtil: Ebû Ali Ahmed b. Ömer İbn Rusteh, "Kitâbü'l-A'lâki'n-Nefîse", *Müslüman Coğrafyacıların Gözüyle Ortaçağda Türkler Türklerin Yaşadığı ve Türklere Komşu Bölgeler*, trans. Yusuf Ziya Yörükân, Ed. Mehmet Şeker et.al., Gelenek Publishing, Istanbul 2004, p.292; İbn Hurdazbih, "Kitâbü'l-Mesâlik ve'l-Memâlik", *Müslüman Coğrafyacıların Gözüyle Ortaçağda Türkler Türklerin Yaşadığı ve Türklere Komşu Bölgeler*, trans. Y. Ziya Yörükân, Ed. Mehmet Şeker et.al., Gelenek Publishing, Istanbul 2004, pp.377-378; *İbn Fadlan Seyahatnamesi ve Ekleri*, trans and Ed. Ramazan Şeşen, Yeditepe Publications, Istanbul 2019, p.47. Mesudî, *Murûc ez-Zeheb (Altın Bozkırlar)*, trans. D. Ahsen Batur, Selenge Publications, Istanbul 2004, p.69.

[3] Mesudî, *Murûc ez-Zeheb*, p.67.

[4] Omeljan Pritsak, agm., pp.17-18.



were tributaries to the Khazars. The Radimichs, Vyatichs, Severians, and Polans living around the Desna River and the central Dnieper region were Slavic peoples who paid tribute to the Khazars in the form of "the fur of one squirrel per household."[5] Additionally, the Finno-Ugric tribes of the Ar, Ves, and Cheremis also recognised Khazar rule and also paid them tribute.[6] According to their customs, the Khazar Khagans would marry the daughters of their vassals, either in accordance with their wishes or against their will if necessary. Indeed, in the 920s, the Khazar Khagan had 25 wives.[7]

The Khazars grew wealthy by dominating the most important trade routes of Eastern Europe. The Volga trade route reached from the lower course of the Don River to the Slavic lands and from there to the Baltic Sea. Merchants traveled from the lower course of the Volga River, where Itil was located, to the Caspian Sea and transported goods from there to Khwarezm and other eastern countries. The Khazars participated in Black Sea trade with Byzantium through the port cities of Crimea, which they controlled. Control over these vital transit routes caused customs duties to become the main source of income for the Khazar Khaganate from the second half of the 8th century to the mid-10th century. Thus, the capital Itil became the largest trade center. Products such as honey, wax, fur, wool, and valuable beaver pelts brought from the Rus and Volga Bulgars to the Khazar lands were exported from there to Khwarezm and other eastern countries. Russian trading ships regularly came to Hazaran (Itil), and tithe taxes were collected on the goods they brought.[8]

The Origin of the Khazars

The Khazars, one of the important Turkic tribes of the Middle Ages, appears in sources in varying forms: Khazar in Turkish, Hazar/Kazar; in Arabic, "الخزر" (el-Hazar); in Persian, "خزر" (Hazar); in Greek, "Χάζαροι" (Hazar-oi); in Hebrew, "כזר/קזר" (Hazar/Kazar); in Syriac, "Kazârâye"; in Armenian, "ԽԱԶԱՐ"

5 *Povest Vremennıh Let*, Perevod D. S. Lihaçeva, A. Yu. Çernova, Vita Nova, Sankt-Peterburg 2012, p.20; Muallâ Uydu Yücel, *İlk Rus Yıllıklarına Göre Türkler*, TTK Publications, Ankara 2007, p.87.

6 Omeljan Pritsak, op.cit., p.19.

7 *İbn Fadlan Seyahatnamesi ve Ekleri*, p.46.

8 İbn Havkal, *10. Asırda İslâm Coğrafyası*, trans. Ramazan Şeşen, Yeditepe Publications, Istanbul 2017, pp.340-342.

(Hazar-k); in Latin, Chazari/Chaziri/Gazari/Caziri; in Russian, "козарин/козары/козари" (Kozarin/Kozarı/Kozari); in Hungarian, Kazar/Kozar; and in Chinese, "Ho-sa/K'o-sa."[9]

Scholars have put forward different theories about the meaning of the name Khazar. According to the Hungarian historian G. Neméth, the name Khazar originates from the Turkish root **kaz/qaz**, which is an onomatopoeic form of the verbs "to roam, wander, flee," combined with the personal suffix **ar/er**. Thus, the name has the meaning of "one who wanders like a vagabond" or "one who roams in a wild, unruly manner."[10] Therefore, Khazar is a tribal name meaning nomadic or wandering.[11] In this respect, similarity to the ethnonym Kazak is notable here.[12] Pelliot, a French orientalist who also criticized G. Neméth's thesis, explained that in its meaning, the name Hazar was a Turkish-origin loanword in Mongolian referring to "a breed of wild dog."[13] Another French Turkologist further elaborated on Pelliot's thesis and linked the Khazars to the Uyghurs. According to him, the name Khazar represents Ogur Turkic rendition of personal/tribal Qasar/Kasar names found in Uyghur inscriptions—a Mongolian loanword for an "aggressive dog."According to Bazin, this name was derived from the Turkish root *qas/kaz* meaning "to crush/oppress/dominate."[14] However, American historian P. B. Golden, who considers G. Neméth's etymology more plausible, argued that Turkish tribes as a rule did not use totemic names such as "dog" (qasar) as titles. While he acknowledged the existence of the Nogays, a Turkish group named after their powerful emir Nogay, whose name means "dog" in Mongolian, he emphasized that Nogay, like Tatar, was originally a Mongol tribal name. Based on this, Golden challenged the views of French scholars, especially

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9 Peter B. Golden, *Hazar Çalışmaları*, trans. E. Çağrı Mızrak, Selenge Publications, Istanbul 2006, pp.144-145.

10 Neméth Gyula, *A Honfoglaló Magyarság Kialakulása*, Közzéteszi Berta Arpád, Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest 1991, pp. 36-37.

11 Peter B. Golden, *op.cit.*, s.155; D. M. Dunlop, *Hazar Yahudi Tarihi*, trans. Zahide Ay, Selenge Publications, Istanbul 2008, pp.21-22.

12 A. Zajaeskowski, Ze studiow nad zagadnieniem Chazarskim, Mémoires de la Comission Orientaliste de l'Académie Polonaise, No: 36, Krakow 1947, p.26-27.

13 Poul Pelliot, "Quesques Noms Turcs d'hommes et de Peuples Finnisant en –ar", *Euvres Posthumes*, II, (Paris 1949), s.207-224; Peter B. Golden, *op.cit*., p.154.

14 Louis Bazin, "Pour une Nouvelle Hypothése sur l'orgine des Khazar", *Materialia Turcica*, VII/8, pp.51-71.



P. Pelliot.[15]The modern Hungarian Turkologist András Róna-Tas, who argued that the original form is Qasar/Kazar, traced the name Hazar to a Persian-origin title Kesar, derived from Caesar (Sezar).[16] This opinion is ambiguous and a clear consensus of opinion does not exist. Historical sources vary regarding both the origin of the Khazars and their migration towards the west. In this respect, different scholars have connected Akatzir with Khazars' origin.[17] The Western Göktürk dynasty, captured the territories of the Akatzir;[18] a confederation of tribes, mainly consisting of Ogur tribes, Sabirs, and other Turkic peoples, with the Western Göktürks as the ruling elite;[19] As a result of this, the Sabirs, who were from the Ugric tribes had undergone Turkification,[20] and became part of the Uighurs (Kasarlar) through the Tieh-leh connection. [21] A union with the Sabirs and other nomadic Hun tribes in the Caucasus was formed, [22] and it is evident that a connection exists between the Hephthalites.[23] There is no doubt that the Khazars were a Turkic tribe.[24]

The Khazar language belonged to the same linguistic family as the Bulgar and Sabir languages.[25] Indeed, Istakhri and Ibn Hawqal argued that the Khazar

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15 Peter B. Golden, *op.cit.*, pp.154-155.

16 András Róna-Tas, "A Kazár Néprévröl", *Nyelvtudományi Közlemények*, 84, Budapeşte, pp.349-379.

17 A. V. Gadlo, *Etniçeskaya İstoriya Severnogo Kavkaza IV-X vv.*, İzdatelstvo Leningradskogo Universiteta, Leningrad 1979, pp.59-66.

18 Omeljan Pritsak, *op.cit*., s.15.

19 Neméth Gyula, *op.cit.*, s.204; Károly Czeglédy, *Gündoğusundan Günbatısına Bozkır Halklarının Göçü*, trans. Günay Karaağaç, Kesit Publications, Istanbul 2009, s.142; Peter B. Golden, *op.cit.*, pp.61-64.

20 M. İ. Artamanov, *Hazar Tarihi. Türkler, Yahudiler, Ruslar*, trans. D. Ahsen Batur, Selenge Publications, Istanbul 2004, pp.95-106.

21 D. M. Dunlop, *op.cit.*, pp.49-55.

22 D. Ludwing, *Struktur und Gesellschaft des Chazaren-Reiches im Licht der Schrift-lichen Quellen*, Münster 1982, p.24.

23 Peter B. Golden, *Türk Halkları Tarihine Giriş. Ortaçağ ve Erken Yeniçağ'da Avrasya ve Ortadoğu'da Etnik Yapı ve Devlet Oluşumu*, trans. Osman Karatay, Ötüken Publications, Istanbul 2013, p.244.

24 İbrahim Kafesoğlu, *Türk Millî Kültürü*, Ötüken Publications, Istanbul 1997, p.167.

25 N. A. Baskakov, *Tyurkskie Yazıki*, İzdatelstvo Vostoçnoy Literaturı, Moskva 1960, s.104; A. Ahmet Caferoğlu, *Türk Dili Tarihi*, 3. Bs., Enderun Publications, Istanbul 1984, pp.86-87.

language was not dissimilar to the language of the Bulgars.[26] Al-Biruni also put forward the view that the language of the Bulgars and the Suvars was composed of both Turkic and Khazar elements.[27] The 10th-century Islamic geographers Istakhri and Ibn Hawqal referred to Khazar as the name of the region whose capital was Itil.[28] They most likely were referring to the tribe that gave its name to the country or state Khazar. [29] A black hole exists in historical sources about when the Khazars arrived west of the Volga River and in the region between the Don and the North Caucasus.

In fact, a Syriac record dating to the mid-6th century (around the year 555) states that the Khazars were among the nomadic peoples living in the Caucasus, alongside the Onogurs, Sabirs, Bulgars, Sarigurs, and Hephthalites.[30] According to later Syriac accounts, the Khazars, with the Bulgars, arrived in the Alan lands known as Barsilia, located in the inner region of Scythia, during the reign of the Byzantine Emperor Maurice (582–602). They adopted the name of the elder brother, Khazar.[31] The Khazars and Bulgars relationship, as described by historical sources, alludes to the possibility that the Khazars may have originated from the Hun-Oghur groups who went on to migrate westward post-disintegration of the Asian Hun Empire. However, whether they were among those Huns who crossed the Volga River to the west from 375 onwards or came later with the Sarigur and Onogur clans into North Caucasus after the Avars forced the Sabirs out of their Siberian homeland in 463 remains obscure. Still, this can be somewhat clarified through al-Masʿūdī's accounts as he states that those people called "Hazaran" by Persians were known as "Sabar/Sabir" Turks. Ultimately, this suggests that the Khazars were closely connected to the Sabir Turks.[32] Nevertheless, with the conquest of the North Cauca-

[26] Ebû İshâk İbrahim bin Muhammed el-Fârisî el-İstahrî, *Kitab Mesâlik el-Memâlik*, M. J. De Goeje Neşri, Brill Leyden 1927, s.225; İbn Havkal, *10. Asırda İslâm Coğrafyası*, p.346.

[27] Ebû Reyhan el-Birûni, *Maziden Kalanlar (el-Asar el-Bakiye)*, trans. D. Ahsen Batur, Selenge Publications, Istanbul 2011, p.85.

[28] İstahrî, *Kitab Mesâlik el-Memâlik*, p.220; İbn Havkal, *10. Asırda İslâm Coğrafyası*, p.339.

[29] İbn Havkal, *10. Asırda İslâm Coğrafyası*, p.339.

[30] *The Syriac Chronicle Known as That of Zachariah of Mitylene*, trs. by F. J. Hamilton and E. W. Brooks, London 1899, pp.328-329.

[31] *Chronique de Michel le Syrien Patriarche Jacobite d'Antioche (1166-1199)*, Editée pour la premiére fois wt traduite en français Par J.-B. Chabot, Tome II, Paris 1901, s.363-364. For a similar source see: Abû'l-Farac, *Abû'l-Farac Tarihi*, p.165.

[32] Ebü'l-Hasen Alî b. el-Hüseyin b. Alî el-Mesûdî, *Kitâb el-Tenbîh ve'l-işrâf*, Michael Jan De Goeje Neşri, Brill Leyden 1894, p.83.



sus by the Göktürks after 558, it is probable that the former Sabir confederation under went restructuring, and that the Khazars emerged from this process. Thus, the Sabir tribes who had settled in the North Caucasus especially those situated in Semender and Belencer, must have constituted the core of the Khazar people.[33] Nevertheless, the Barsils (Bersula) were also among the Turkic tribes that played an important part in the emergence of the Khazar political entity.[34]

The Khazars and Göktürk Khaganate

The rise of the Khazars as a power is directly related to the activities in the west of the Göktürk Khaganate. Following the victory gained after defeating the Hephthalites in 556 under the leadership of İstemi Yabgu, the Göktürks, along with Ogur-Bulgar groups in the Caucasus, brought the Khazars, or more specifically the Sabirs (Belencers), under their control by the year 571.[35] Finally, in 576, with the conquest of Bosporus in Crimea and military campaigns extending to the Kerch port, the Alans and Utrigurs were also rendered under the suzerainty of the Göktürk Khaganate. Also, with the exception of the Avars and Kutrigurs, the formation of a Turan State was achieved for the first time in history.[36] However, with the death of Khagan T'a-po (Taspar) in 581, the Göktürk Khaganate was divided into two wings: the eastern and the western.[37] During this period, it is thought that the Khazar Turks played a siginificant part in ensuring the continuation of the dominance of the Western Göktürk Khaganate in the Caucasus and north of the Black Sea. Thus, Byzantine and Chinese sources that give accounts of the Western Göktürk Khaganate referred to them as the "Turkic Khazars (T'u-küe Ho-sa)."[38] This example clearly demonstrates the relationship that existed between the Khazars and the Göktürks. In fact, the Khazars were insturmental as the military power of Tong Yabgu, the ruler of the Western Göktürk Khaganate, who was an ally of the Byzan-

33 İbrahim Kafesoğlu, *op.cit.*, p.167.

34 Osman Karatay, "Hazarlar", *Doğu Avrupa Türk Tarihi*, ed. O. Karatay-S. Acar, Kronik Publications, Istanbul 2020, pp.316-317.

35 Taberî, *Milletler ve Hükümdarlar Tarihi III*, Vol.3, trans. Zâkir Kadirî Ugan-Ahmet Temir, MEB Publications, Istanbul 1991, pp.1055-1057.

36 Dinçer Koç, *İdil Bulgarları*, Selenge Publications, Istanbul 2021, p.62.

37 Ahmet Taşağıl, *Gök-Türkler I*, TTK Publications, Ankara 2003, pp.34-35.

38 Edouard Chavannes, *Çin Kaynaklarına Göre Batı Türkleri*, trans. Mustafa Koç, Selenge Publications, Istanbul 2007, p.198; M. İ. Artamanov, *op.cit.*, pp.191-210.

tine Emperor Heraclius during the long-lasting Byzantine-Sasanian war from 603 to 628. After Heraclius captured Albania, Antropatane, Ganja, and the Sasanian capital Nineveh during 626-627, following the failed siege of Constantinople by the Sasanians and Avars, he received tremendous military assistance from the Khazars. Subsequently, Tong Yabgu, together with the Khazars, worked tirelessly to establish Turkish control in the Caucasus after the retreat of the Sasanians. Subsequently, following the conquest of Tbilisi in 629, Tong Yabgu ordered his son Shad and the Khazar commander Chorpan TarKhagan to capture Albania and Armenia. Despite that fact that the Turkic-Khazar army conquered Albania and Armenia, coming away with substantial booty, they retreated to the north after Tong Yabgu's death in 630.[39] While the Göktürk Khaganate was undergoing its demişe due to internal disputes and the China factor the Khazars achieved independent. Some also argue that a few rulers belonging to the Turkish Ashina dynasty moved west and took leadership of the Khazars, restructuring the Khazar Khaganate after 630.[40] Therefore, in the administrative hierarchy of the Khazar Khaganate, the titles of Göktürk origin such as Shad/Bey, Ilteber, Tudun, and Tarhan were employed, and their rulers were entitled Khagan. The anonymous Hudud al-'Alam states that the lineage of the Khagans originates from the Ishā descendants, namely, the Ashina family.[41] This also strengthens the argument that those who established the Khazar Khaganate were of Göktürk origin.[42] It is also possible that İşâ denotes "shad." It is known that "shad" was a title used for princes belonging to the royal family within the Göktürk Khaganate administration. On the other hand, it may also refer to Tong Yabgu's son Shad, and thus to the Göktürk ruling lineage.[43]

With the establishment of the Khazar Khaganate in North Caucasus from the 630s onwards, the remnants of the European Hun Empire, which had fractured following the death of Attila, and the Hun-Ogur tribes (Utrigur, Kutrigur, Onogur, Sarıgur) united and founded the Great Bulgar State. However, this state began to

39 Altay Tayfun Özcan, *Hazar Hakanlığı ve Etrafındaki Dünya*, Kronik Publications, Istanbul 2019, pp.44-75.

40 A. Zeki Velidi Togan, *İbn Fadlân's Reisebericht. Deutsche Morgenlandische Gesellschaft*, Kommissionsverlag F. A. Brockhaus, Leipzig 1939, pp.267-271.

41 *Hudûd al-Âlam 'The Regions of the World' a Persian Geography 372 A.H.-982 A.D.,* Translated and Explained by V. Minorsky, London 1937, pp.161-162; Ramazan Şeşen, *İslâm Coğrafyacılarına Göre Türkler ve Türk Ülkeleri*, 2.Bs., TTK Publications, Ankara 2001, p.70.

42 M. İ. Artamanov, *op.cit.*, p.230.

43 A. P. Novoseltsev, *Hazarskoe Gosudarstvo i Ego Rol v İstorii Vostoçnoy Evropı i Kavkaza*, İzdatelstvo Nauka, Moskova 1990, p.89; Osman Karatay, op.cit., p.324.



fragment in the 660s due to succession disputes among Kubrat's sons following his death. Taking advantage of this situation, the rulers of the Khazar Khaganate attacked the Great Bulgar State, forcing them to withdraw to the Danube River and thus achieving control of a sizeable portion of the Bulgar tribes (around 679).[44] In addition, the Crimean Peninsula also came under Khazar control. Shortly thereafter in 681, Alp Il-it'uēr (Alp Ilteber), the ruler of the Hun Kingdom located north of Derbent, became a vassal of the Khazars.[45] Kalankatlı Moses described Alp Ilteber as a ruler who converted to Christianity and attempted to steer his people away from the old Tengri religion. In relation to Alp Ilteber's allegiance to the Khazars and his standing with the Khagan, Moses wrote: "He showed bravery alongside the Khazar Khagan in Turkestan and earned an impeccable reputation. He won the Khagan's favor, who gave his daughter's hand in marriage to him. Moreover, he was granted the title of il-ituer."[46]

Consequently, commencing from the east of the Volga River, the Khazar Khaganate expanded carefully, due to Arab incursion, northwestward from the region between the Don and Dnieper rivers to Dagestan and then to Crimea. From the mid-7th century until the second half of the 10th century, it continued its status as the most powerful and important state in Eastern Europe. At the same time, the Khazars' disagreements with the Muslim Arabs in the Caucasus is noteworthy.

The Arab-Khazar Conflicts

During the time of Caliph Umar, when Islamic armies won the battles of Qadisiyyah (636) and Nihavand (642) and conquered Iran, the Khazars controlled Northern Azerbaijan and Dagestan. By the time of Caliph Uthman's rule, in the year 651, the Islamic armies had also incorporated Irminiya and Azerbaijan into

44 Theophanes, *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor, Byzantine and Near Eastern History AD 284-813*, Translated with Introduction and Commentary by Cyril Mango and Roger Scott with the assistance of Geoffrey Greatrex, Clarendon Press, Oxford, New York 1997, p.498; Nikephoros Patriach of Constantinople, *Short History*, Text, Translation, and Commentary by Cyril Mango, Washington D.C. 1990, pp.87-89; P. K. Kokovtov, *Evreysko-Hazarskaya Perepiska v X v.*, İzdatelstvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, Leningrad 1932, p.92.

45 Peter B. Golden, *Hazar Çalışmaları*, pp.107-108.

46 Kalankatlı Moses, *Alban Tarihi ve Alban Salnamesi Mhitar Koş*, trans. Yusuf Gedikli, Selenge Publications, Istanbul 2006, p.244.

their territories. Thus, with the completion of the conquest of Iran, the Muslims became neighbors to the Khazars.[47]

After the conquest of Azerbaijan and Irminiya, the Muslim Arabs encountered the Khazar Turks. As early as 639, Caliph Umar appointed Suraka ibn Amr to lead the conquest of Derbend (Bab al-Abwab) and directed Habib ibn Maslama to assist him. The Islamic army, under the command of Abdurrahman ibn Rabi'a, who also led Suraka's vanguard unit, made an agreement with the ruler of Derbend, Shahrbaraz. Following this, Shahrbaraz accepted submission to the Muslims (642-643). The Islamic army under the command of Suraka moved north of Derbend and came up against the Khazars. Following Suraka's death, Abdurrahman ibn Rabi'a was appointed commander of the Muslim army, and he made headway in the struggle against the Khazars for control over the Caucasus, launching raids into Khazar territory. However, in a grisly battle close to the Khazar capital Belencer, the Muslims were swiftly defeated by the Khazars, and Abdurrahman was martyred at this battle (652-653). His sibling, Salman ibn Rabi'a, carried on with the conflist against the Khazars for a considerabler period, but eventually had to return to Derbend. Subsequently, internal conflicts within the Islamic Caliphate caused the Arab incursions on the Khazar lands to temporarily cease.[48]

After the martyrdom of Caliph Uthman, the Khazars gained dominance over Derbend and Northern Azerbaijan. It was during the reign of Muawiyah, that they simultaneously launched raids into Irminiya. During this period, the Arabs had established themselves deeply in Transcaucasia, and at the beginning of the 8th century, a series of Arab-Khazar wars occurred, with varying victories for both sides. The Khazars sided with the Byzantine Empire, which defended Anatolia against the Caliphate's attacks, and acted in unity against the Arabs.

It was during the reign of Caliph Walid ibn Abd al-Malik that the skirmishes between the Umayyads and the Khazars began. In 708, Maslama ibn Abd al-Malik, appointed as the governor of Azerbaijan and Irminiya, led a campaign against the Khazars and advanced as far as Derbend. However, he was quickly relieved

[47] İbnü'l-Esir, *İslâm Tarihi El-Kâmil Fi't-Târih Tercümesi*, Vol. 3, trans. Ahmet Ağırakça, Bahar Publications, Istanbul 1986, pp.32-35; Ahmed b. Yahyâ el-Belâzurî, *Fütûhu'l-Büldân/ Ülkelerin Fetihleri*, trans. Mustafa Fayda, Siyer Publications, Istanbul 2013, pp.372-377.

[48] Dunlop, *op.cit.*, pp.63-65; Artamanov, *op.cit.,* pp.237-240; Abdülkerim Özaydın, "Türklerin İslamiyeti Kabulü", *Türkler*, Vol. 4., Yeni Türkiye Publications, Ankara 2002, p.241.



from his duties and was replaced by Marwan ibn Muhammad.[49] It was in the year 709/710, that the Khazars organised a large army of 80,000 troops and moved onto conquer Albania.[50] Shortly after this Khazar victory, Marwan was dismissed from the governorship of Armenia (Irminiyye) and Mesleme b. Abdülmelik was reappointed to his post. Mesleme started a second campaign against the Khazars and conquered Derbend and some of the surrounding cities using catapults.[51] He ordered that the Derbend Fortress be destroyed, in order to shatter the Khazar defense.[52] Some sources state that Mesleme launched a third campaign to Derbend in 714.[53]

After Mesleme's departure from the region because of the siege of Istanbul, the Khazars, as allies of Byzantium, initiated campaigns into Armenia and Azerbaijan during 717-718, with many killed and captives taken. In response to this, Caliph Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz appointed Hatim ibn Nu'man al-Bahali to lead a campaign against the Khazars. Hatim truimphed over the Khazars and sent an estimated 50 captives to the Caliph as a symbol of his triumph. Seeking revenge for this defeat, the Khazars started a massive scale assualt against the Arabs in 721-722. The Arabs sought revenge the following year by launching an offensive against the Khazars. However, the Umayyad army under the command of Subayt al-Nahrani was decisively defeated by the Khazars, as they had reinforcements from both the Kipchaks and Bulgars. Therefore, the Caliph appointed Yazid ibn Abd al-Malik Jarrah ibn Abdullah al-Hakami as governor of Armenia to continue the conflict against the Khazars.[54]

Upon finding out that Jarrah was making preparations for a military campaign, the Khazars retreated to Derbend and fortified their defenses. In order to deceive the enemy and to weaken their defenses, Jarrah let it be known that he would be travelling to Berdea. Upon learning this, the Khazars eased their defensive precautions. In order to capitalise on this oppurtunity, Jarrah and the Umayyad army

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49 İbnü'l-Esîr, *İslâm Tarihi El-Kâmil Fi't-Târih Tercümesi*, C.4, trans. M. Beşir Eryarsoy, Bahar Publications, Istanbul 1986, p.484; Abdülkerim Özaydın, op.cit., p.244.

50 Kalankatlı Moses, *Alban Tarihi*, p.290.

51 İbnü'l-Esir, *İslâm Tarihi el-Kâmil fi't-Târih Tercümesi*, Vol.4, p.499.

52 Kalankatlı Moses, *Alban Tarihi*, p.290.

53 Dunlop, *op.cit.*, p.75; Artamanov, *op.cit.*, pp.270-271; Özaydın, op.cit., p.244; A.T. Özcan, *op.cit.*, pp.127-132.

54 Halife b. Hayyât, *Tarihu Halife b. Hayyat (Halife B. Hayyat Tarihi)*, trans. Abdulhalik Bakır, Ankara 2008, p.405; Dunlop, *op.cit.*, s.77-78; Artamanov, *op.cit.*, pp.271-273; Özaydın, op.cit., p.244; A.T. Özcan, *op.cit.*, pp.132-148.

under his leadership quickly headed for Derbend and established their headquarters near Neherü'r-Rân, which is near Derbend. The battle that transpired there ended in success for the Umayyads, and the Muslims followed the retreating Khazar forces all the way to Belencer and subsequently captured the city in the summer of 722. Jarrah did not stay in one place for long due to the approaching cold winter. The Khazars sought revenge for this crushing defeat, crossing into Derbend the following year and launched an assault on Armenia. However, they were again overpowered and forced out by the Umayyad forces.[55]

Following the death of Yazid b. Abdülmelik in 724, Hisham b. Abdülmelik was declared successor to the Umayyad caliphate and continued the struggle against the Khazars. In order to achieve this, he sent reinforcements to the Caucasus. The Khazars also did not waste any time and started to prepare for battle. The Khazar Khagan, mobilised a large army and acted quickly, attacking the Arab garrison before the reinforcements from Syria could arrive, and consequently defeated the Muslim army. As a result of this, Jarrah was dismissed and Mesleme b. Abdülmelik was appointed in his place. After orchestrating victorious raids against the Khazars, Mesleme retreated from the region in 726. The Khazars moved towards a counterattack but were unsuccessful and were defeated by the Arab army under the command of Haris b. Amr al-Ta'i. In the following years (727-729), Mesleme defeated the Khazars on several occassions and gained tremendous quantities of booty in the process.[56]

Cerrah b. Abdullah was named governor of Armenia and Azerbaijan following Mesleme. He marched from Tiflis to Belencer between 729 and 730, overcame the Khazars, and took the city. He succeeded in capturing this city as part of his ongoing battle against the Khazars, who withdrew to their capital Itil (Dâdu'l-Beyzâ) north of the Caspian Sea. However, did not prolong his stay and left with a sizeable amount of booty. Following Cerrah's departure, the Khazars, under the leadership of Barsbek, the son of the Khazar Khagan, began a massive onslaught against the

[55] Ebû Cafer Muhammed Bin Cerir'üt-Taberî, *Tarih-i Taberi*, C.IV, trans. M. Faruk Gürtunca, Sağlam Publishers, Istanbul 2006, p.348-349; İbnü'l-Esîr, *İslâm Tarihi el-Kâmil fi't-Târih Tercümesi*, C.V, trans. Y. Apaydın, Bahar Publications, Istanbul 1986, p.95-96; Halife b. Hayyat, *Tarihu Halife b. Hayyat*, p.405-408; D. M. Dunlop, *op.cit.*, p.78-82; M. İ. Artamanov, *op.cit.*, p.273-276; Özaydın, agm., s.245; A. T. Özcan, *op.cit.*, p.148-149.

[56] *Tarihu Halife b. Hayyat*, p.417-418; İbnü'l-Esir, *İslâm Tarihi el-Kâmil fi't-Târih Tercümesi*, C.5, p.123; Dunlop, *op.cit.*, p.83-84; Artamanov, *op.cit.*, p.278-279; Özaydın, *op.cit.*,., p.245; A.T. Özcan, *op.cit.*, p.151-152.



Arabs toward the end of 730. The Khazars routed an Arab army of about 25,000 men and advanced as far as Ardabil. Cerrah, a senior military leader of the caliphate, was slain. After this triumph, distinct Khazar units took control of the undefended areas of undefended regions of Beylekan, Bajarvan, Ganja, and Arran and plundered the surroundings. They later reached as far as Diyarbakır and the vicinity of Mosul. Cerrah b. Abdullah was named governor of Armenia and Azerbaijan following Mesleme. He marched from Tiflis to Belencer between 729 and 730, overcame the Khazars, and took the city. He succeeded in capturing this city as part of his ongoing battle against the Khazars, who withdrew to their capital Itil.

In response to these deep incursions into the caliphate, Caliph Hisham b. Abdülmelik assigned Said b. Amr al-Harashi to mobilise a large army against the Khazars. After retaking Berdea from the Khazars, Said was victorious against the Khazar armies at Berzend and Beylekan. However, shortly after, Said was relieved of his duties and replaced by Mesleme. Mesleme then advanced to Derbend, instructing some of the forces to remain behind. Mesleme subsequently left the region, as the conflict raged on in Khazar Khaganate territory. In 731, Mesleme advanced to Belencer and almost brought the Khazar army to their knees but had to withdraw when the Khazar Khagan, having secured aid from neighboring rulers, launched a counterattack.[57]

Following the dismissal of Mesleme, Mervan b. Muhammed was appointed as the governor of Azerbaijan and Irminiyye. In conjunction with huge armies gathered from Syria and Iraq, Mervan launched successful campaigns against the Khazars from 732 to 736, putting them under severe pressure. However, the ultimate blow to the Khazars came in 737. Mervan led a 150,000-man army that marched from Kasak, which is close to the Kura River, to Semender. He divided his army into two columns and entered Khazar territory through Derbend and Daryal. The unexpected invasion caught the Khazars off guard, and they started to flee in the direction of Itil, their city. Mervan surrounded Itil, intent on striking a last blow. Under the leadership of a commander named Tarhan, the Khazar Khagan sent a final force of about 40,000 soldiers to fight the Umayyad army. Ultimately, the Arabs once again crushed the Khazar army.

[57] Taberî, *Tarih-i Taberi*, C. IV, p.350-359; Belâzuri, *Fütûhu'l-Buldân*, p.295-296; *Tarihu Halife b. Hayyat,* p.419-424; İbnü'l-Esir, *İslâm Tarihi El-Kâmil Fi't-Târih Tercümesi*, C.5, p.132-136; Dunlop, *op.cit.*, p.84-96; Artamanov, *op.cit.*, p.279-286; Özaydın, *op.cit.*,, p.245; A.T. Özcan, *op.cit.*, p.153-172.

Following this defeat, the Khazar Khagan fled into his remotest territories and was forced to negotiate for peace with the Arabs. The most critical condition of the treaty between the victorious Arab commander Mervan and the Khazars was that the Khagan would retain his throne in exchange for converting to Islam. To demonstrate his alleged sincerity, he even requested jurists to be sent by the Arab victors to teach him the pillars of Islam.

Of course, this was solely a political concession intended to maintain his position to be able to repel the Arabs out of his country. In accordance with the Khagan's plan, the Umayyad army retreated from Khazar lands and returned to Derbend.

Nonetheless, the Umayyad triumph of 737 greatly weakened Khazar influence in the Caucasus for a considerable period of time. Following this victory, Mervan focused on consolidating Arab control in Azerbaijan and the Caucasus by suppressing local rulers.[58] However, after a while, the internal chaos within the Caliphate led to the fall of the Umayyad dynasty, and the Abbasids, who were more cautious about military expansion towards the north, took power. This event witnessed a new turning point in Arab-Khazar relations.

The Abbasid Caliph Abu Ja'far al-Mansur directed the governor of Irminiyye, Yazid ibn Useyd, to continue peaceful relations with the Khazars and to establish marriage ties for diplomatic purposes. The Khazar Khagan accepted Yazid's proposal of marriage that was relayed through an envoy, and agreed to marry his daughter. Consequently, Yazid married a Khazar princess in a ceremonial wedding of grandeur held in Berdaa.

However, a few years later, the Khazar princess passed during childbirth, and her relatives alleged foul play, in effect that she had been murdered. This tragedy spelled end to the period of tranquility between the Arabs and the Khazars.

To avenge the death of the Khazar princess, the Khazar Khagan dispatched a large army to Derbend in 762. The Khazar attack resulted in significant damage to Derbend and its surroundings and caused many fatalities.

This campaign was followed at the beginning of 764 by a large-scale invasion of Abbasid-controlled territories in the Caucasus by a Khazar army led by a commander named As-Tarhan al-Khwarezmi. After capturing the thoroughfares of

[58] *Tarih-i Taberi*, IV, p.363-364; Belâzuri, *op.cit.*, p.297-299; *Tarihu Halife b. Hayyat*, p.430; İbnü'l-Esir, *op.cit.,* C.5, p.178; Dunlop, *op.cit.*, p.96-103; Artamanov, *op.cit.*, p.187-196; Özaydın, *op.cit.,* p.245; A.T. Özcan, *op.cit.*, p.175-196.



Hamzin, Laks, and Daryal, the Abbasid Caliph sent an additional 55,000 soldiers from Syria, Iran, and Iraq to provide assistance for Yazid. The Abbasid forces went as far as Shirvan and then came face to face with the Khazar army. The battle witnessed a defeat for the Muslims and a victory for the Khazars. Even though they won, the Khazars retreated to their lands with substantial spoils of war.

Despite the fact that the Abbasid Caliph gave orders for the prisons to be emptied and increased the number of troops stationed in the Caucasus by thousands, the Arabs yielded military superiority to the Khazars and were able to adopted a defensive stance. However, the balance of power in the Caucasus still shifted in favor of the Khazars.[59]

According to accounts, from the reign of Caliph Abu Ja'far al-Mansur until the era of Harun al-Rashid. there was no serious conflict between the Khazars and the Muslim Arabs in the Caucasus for nearly half a century. The incessant Khazar attacks wrought havoc on the Abbasid Caliphate causing it to weaken, as local rebellions became more commomplace. The Armenians were the first to revolt against Arab rule, followed by disgruntled groups in Kartli and Albania.

The chief revolt was that of the Arabs dwelling in the Caucasus; they had been excused from taxes for their service against the Khazars until such time as Caliph Harun al-Rashid took that remission away from them, and so they rose against Baghdad. Not only this but these Arab rebels invited the Khazars to help them.

Just as in 780, the insurgent Prince of Kartli, Narses sought shelter with the Khazars and requested their assistance. However, probably placing higher value on their trade ties with the Arabs, the Khazars did not provide assistance. Rather, they subdued him with gifts and sent him back to Kartli where he stopped revolting. However, when Leon II, King of Abkhazia and the Khazar Khagan's daughter's grandson, rose up against Arab rule in 787, the Khazars gave him support. In return, they took Ap'hazet and Ergisi—land in southwestern Georgia. It is at this point that the Khazar influence reached a new level of power in Abkhazia lasting until the 10th century.[60]

By the late 8th century, the rebellion among the Arabs in the Caucasus reached its climax. In response to the unrest in the region, Harun al-Rashid appointed Sa'id

[59] K. Czeglédy, "Khazar Raids in Transcaucasia in 762-764 A.D.", *AOASH*, T.XI/1 (1960), p.75-88; Artamanov, *op.cit.*, p.316-320; Özaydın, *op.cit.,* p.247; A.T. Özcan, *op.cit.*, p.196-204.

[60] Artamanov, *op.cit.*, p.320-326; A.T. Özcan, *op.cit.*, p.205-207.

ibn Salm as the governor of Arminiya in 797. After Sa'id had the rebel leader Najm ibn Hashim in Derbend executed, Najm's son sought refuge with the Khazars and requested their assistance.

In 799, the Khazars advanced through Derbend to the banks of the Kura River, destroying the settlements in the area. Consequently, the Abbasid Caliph dismissed Sa'id and appointed Yazid ibn Muzyad as a replacement. The newly appointed governor Yazid, along with the commander Huzaymah ibn Hazim, launched a majör retailitory campaign against the Khazars. Given the seriousness of the situation, the Khazars withdrew without engaging in battle. This event marked the final military show down between the Arabs and the Khazars. From the early 8th century onward, military conflicts ended and mutual political, religious, and commercial relations commenced.[61]

During the reign of the caliph of Al-Wathiq (842–847), the Abbasid envoys Muhammad ibn Musa al-Khwarizmi, the astronomer, and Sellam al-Tajuman[62] came[63] to the lands of the Khazars to glean information about the barrier of Gog and Magog (Yajuj and Majuj).

The Khazars and The Byzantine Empire

The Khazars, were at first willing participants in the Turkic-Byzantine alliance formed against the Sasanian Empire during the period of their allegiance to the Göktürk Khaganate. The Khazars later continued to maintain close relations with the Byzantine Empire as an independent entity in the midst of the Muslim Arabs' advancement into Anatolia and the Caucasus. The Khazar rulers sometimes were a nuisance to the Byzantine Empire because they meddled in its internal affairs. Through pragmentic marriages aimed at furthering political means, their influence grew within the Byzantine court. This fostered the development of commercial, religious, and cultural contacts between the two states. However, Khazar leaders did not hesitate to oppose Byzantine moves that threatened Khazar vested interests' north of the Black Sea.

61 Özaydın, *op.cit.,* p.247; A.T. Özcan, *op.cit.*, p.208.

62 The Great Wall of China is being referred to.

63 Muhammed b. Ahmed el-Mukaddesî, *İslâm Coğrafyası (Ahsenü't-Takâsîm)*, trans. D. Ahsen Batur, Selenge Publications, Istanbul 2015, p.368-369; İbn Hurdazbih, *op.cit.*, p.378-379.



The Byzantine Emperor Justinian II was deposed in a coup in 695 primarily because of internal unrest caused by revolts in Constantinople and the burden of hefty heavy taxes. The Emperor was exiled to Cherson, a highly significant trade center on the northern coast of the Black Sea. This event signalled a turning point in Khazars-Byzantine relations. The deposed emperor, became an assassination target in Cherson in 704, as he was planning to retake the throne, and was forced to flee to the city of Doros which was under Khazar influence, and later took refuge with the Khazar Khagan. The Khazar Khagan, warmly welcomed Justinian, who subsequently married the daughter of the Khagan who took the Christian name Theodora. From then on, Justinian settled in Phanagoria, a city under Khazar rule in the northern Black Sea, which was formerly the capital of the Great Bulgarian State), together with his Khazar princess wife, and was supported by his father-in law the Khagan. The Byzantine Emperor Apsimar, who was closely watching the events in the northern Black Sea that were transpiring against him, despatched a diplomatic party to the Khazar Khagan with expensive presents and demanded that Justinian be delivered alive or dead. The Khagan agreed to the terms and made plans to apprehend his son-in-law Justinian after being persuaded by the Byzantine envoys. However, once his wife Theodora informed Justinian of the plot against him, he fled with his pregnant wife by the Black Sea to the Danube River and sought refuge with Tervel Khagan, the Bulgar king on the Danube. Thus, with his assistance, he was able to return to Constantinople and reclaim the crown (705). The Emperor dispatched a fleet to Crimea to bring his wife to him. However, the fleet unexpectedly sank in the Black Sea. Upon learning this, the Khazar Khagan sent envoys to Justinian with the following words: "Would two or three ships not have sufficed to bring your wife back, that so many people died? Or did you think to take her by force? Look, a male child was born to you. Now send someone to collect them!" Thus, with the permission of the Khazar Khagan, Justinian had his wife and son Tiberius brought to his palace by men sent by the Khazars.[64] Meanwhile, as the influence of the Byzantine capital was characterised by demise in Cherson and Crimea in general, the influence of the Khazar Khaganate was growing. The Khazar influence grew so much so that there was now a Khazar Tudun in Cherson responsible for collecting taxes.[65]

[64] Theophanes, *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor*, p.520-523; Nikephoros Patriach of Constantinople, *Short History*, p.101-105; Artamanov, *op.cit.*, p.260-262; A.T. Özcan, *op.cit.*, p.107-113.

[65] Theophanes, *op.cit.*, p.521.

In order to reinstate the dominance of the Byzantine Empire, the Emperor Justinian II launched a naval expedition to Crimea in 710 to achieve this. The Byzantine army easily took control of Cherson, and several bureaucrats, including the Tudun appointed by the Khazar Khagan, were arrested and sent to Istanbul. Meanwhile, after Elias, a Byzantine commander, was appointed as governor of Cherson, the navy that had successfully completed the campaign set sail for Constantinople. However, many ships sank due to the adverse weather conditions and according to some sources, seventy-three thousand people drowned. After this disaster, Justinian II immediately made preparations for a new fleet and, with great revenge in mind, ordered his army to destroy all towns in the Crimean Peninsula, including Cherson. Learning that the Byzantine navy was approaching to punish them, the residents of Crimea desperately appealed to the Khazar Khagan for protection. When the Khazar Khagan accepted their request, the cities in Crimea rose up en masse against Byzantine rule. In fact, Elias and Bardanes, nobles appointed by Justinian II as governor and leaders in Cherson, headed the rebellion. Faced with the danger of his military actions being thwarted, the Byzantine Emperor was forced to appeal to the Khazar Khagan. He sent a delegation to apologize for the situation. As a sign of goodwill, he sent the captured Cherson officials, including Zailos and the Khazar Tudun, back with them. In return, he demanded that the rebels Elias and Bardanes to be handed over to him. Thus, he was ready to concede to Khazar dominance over the Crimean towns in exchange for the rebellious officials. However, after reaching Cherson, the delegation mission was not achieved due to the unexpected death of the Khazar Tudun during the journey to the Khazar Khagan. The Khazars reacted by martyring 300 Byzantine soldiers who accompanied the delegation at the Tudun's funeral. After this, the rebellion against Justinian II in Crimean cities, especially in Cherson, became more determined, and the populace declared the exiled Bardanes as their new emperor.[66] However, events began to adopt a more complicated nature.

Emperor Justinian II made one last ditch attempt to regain control of the situation in Crimea and launched another campaign to Chersonesus. The future Emperor Bardanes also sought refuge with the Khazar Khagan. However, when the Byzantine army laid siege to Chersonesus, Khazar forces suddenly appeared. As a result, the Byzantine commanders, realizing they could no longer take the city, defected to the rebels' side. Seizing the opportunity, the people of Chersonesus and the Byzantine army that had previously joined the rebellion, led by Bardanes sent

[66] Theophanes, *op.cit.*, p.525-528; *Short History*, p.105-111.



by the Khazar Khagan, marched toward the imperial capital. In return for the Khazar Khagan's support, Bardanes collected tribute from Chersonesus. Subsequently, with the support of the Khazar Khaganate, Bardanes truimphed against Justinian II and ascended to the Byzantine throne. In this coup, the deposed emperor and his son, the Khazar Khagan's grandson Tiberius, were killed.[67]

After the overthrow of Justinian II, there were no conflicts between the Khazars and the Byzantine Empire, as both states were occupied with resisting Arab invasions. Indeed, when the Islamic armies besieged Constantinople in 717, the Khazars, at the request of the Byzantines, entered Irminiya through Derbend but were forced back by the Arab army.[68] During a period of rising Arab pressure, Byzantine Emperor Leo III (717-741) decided that it would be in his best interests to enter into a pragmatic marriage alliance with the Khazars. To achieve this, he dispatched envoys to the Khagan, asking for his daughter's hand in marriage for his son and heir, Constantine. The Khazar Khagan accepted the proposal and sent his daughter, Çiçek Hatun, to Constantinople to marry the emperor's son. Çiçek Hatun was then baptized, converted to Christianity, and given the name Irene. She later married Emperor Constantine V, who succeeded her father-in-law, and their son Leo IV (775-780) became famously known in history as "Khazar Leo."[69]

The Khazars launched a campaign in 786 or 787 against the city of Doros, located in the mountainous area of Gotya in the Crimea, and assumed control of the city. However, the people of Doros later revolted against Khazar rule under the leadership of a priest called Johannes. The Khazars suppressed this revole using military tactics. The Doros rebellion serves as crucial evidence of the important presence of Khazar authority in Crimea during the 8th century.[70]

During the first half of the 9th century, the relations between the Byzantine Empire and the Khazar Khaganate were primarily of a commercial and cultural nature. However, the pressure from the Pechenegs and the mass migration of Hungarians from the east into Khazar territories prompted the Khazar leadership to adopt different strategies. The Khazar rulers decided on building a fortress on the left bank of the middle region of the Don River (in Tsymlyanka) as a fortified garrison of Khazar control in Eastern Europe. To this effect, the Khazar Khagan

67 Theophanes, *op.cit.*, p.528-529; *Short History*, p.111-113.

68 M. İ. Artamanov, *op.cit.*, p.307.

69 Theophanes, *op.cit Confessor*, p.567; *Short History*, p.131.

70 Artamanov, *op.cit.*, p.418-419; A.T. Özcan, *op.cit.*, p.209-211.

requested that the Byzantine Emperor Theophilos send skilled builders. Following this, at the Khagan's request, in 834 or 835, expert builders from Byzantium led by the engineer Petronas Kamateros, built the fortress of Sarkel (Akkerman/White Fortress) using white stones. The construction of this fortress thereby contributed to the defense of the Khazars.[71] In addition to Sarkel, archaeological evidence has definitively confirmed that a network of similar fortifications was established along the branches of the Don River.

The Adoption of Judiasim by the Khazars

Only a handful of Jewish documents from the Middle Ages and a few works of Islamic philosophers contain mention of the Khazars' conversion to Judaism. Information about this is contained in the reply letter of Khazar King Joseph to that of Hasdai ibn Shaprut, the Jewish vizier (d. 915–970) for Umayyad Caliph of Al-Andalus, Abd al-Rahman III, in which it states that Bulan was commander of a military group among the Khazars, especially in Dagestan, where Jews had significant population presence.[72] Bulan was the first ruler to accept Judaism after allegedly dreaming of an angel promising him victory and a subsequent defeat of the Muslim enemies and the capture of Ardabil.[73] Indeed, since the Khazars achieved a huge victory against the Muslim Arabs and took Ardabil in 731–732. It is thought that Bulan's adoption of Judaism occurred in that period. According to the same source, upon hearing of Bulan's reputation, the Byzantine and Muslim rulers sent their scholars with elaborate gifts to persuade him to adopt their religions. Consequently, Bulan apparently held a debate where Jewish, Christian, and Muslim scholars defended their faiths against one another, and after Judaism was deemed superior to the others, he embraced Judaism.[74]

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71 Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De Administrando İmpero*, Greek Text ed.by Gy. Moravcsik English Translation by R. J. H. Jenkins, Washington 1967, p.177. Sarkel arkeolojik kalıntıları hakkında bk. M. İ. Artamanov, "Sarkel-Belaya Veja", *Trudı Volgo-Donskoy Arheologiçeskoy Ekspeditsii*, T. I, Materialı i İssledovaniya po Arheologii SSSR No 62, İzdatelstvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, Moskva-Leningrad 1962, p.7-84.

72 Jewish colonies in Dagestan had spread their religion among the Khazars. Togan, *İbn Fadlân's Reisebericht*, p.313.

73 P. K. Kokovtsev, *Evreysko-Hazarskaya Perepiska v X v.*, p.74-76, 91-93.

74 The Khazar king's adoption of Judaism is also mentioned, with only slight differences, by the medieval Islamic author al-Bakri in Jewish sources. According to his account, the Khazar ruler (al-malik) organized a debate among Jewish and Christian clergy to determine



The 10th-century Cambridge Anonymous (Letter of Kenize) paints a rather different picture on this matter. The source states that the Jews who fled under pressure, upon coming to the Khazar country, mingled with the Khazars and assimilated. This historical source further alleges that they mostly left behind their customs and laws of religion within a short time except for circumcision and keeping Saturday as the sabbath. At that time in Khazar lands, whoever was victorious in battle was deemed leader of the people. Once during a battle a Jew fought off some enemies who were attacking Khazar land with his sword, he later became very famous because of his courageous reputation. For this reason, according to very old customs, the Khazars chose him as their commander. Under the strong influence of his wife Serah, whose name clearly denotes her Jewish identity, and her father who was extremely strict in matters relating to Judaism this commander became one of the ardent defenders of Judaism.

When the Greeks and Arabs heard of the conversions to Judiasm, they sent envoys objecting to the adoption of Judaism among the Khazars. After the envoys arrived and none of the three religious representatives succeeded in the debates, the Jewish commanders gave an order for the Books of the Law, hidden in a cave in the Tizul Valley, to be retrieved. Influenced by Books of the Law, the Khazar Jews persuaded the other inhabitants of Khazaria to convert to Judaism. After this, Jews from Baghdad, Khorasan, and the Byzantine Empire began migrating to the Khazar Khaganate, thereby contributing to their influence. The Jewish commander adopted the name Sabriel and became the first Khazar king (melik).[75] The story told in the *Cambridge Anonymous* differs significantly from that in Yosif's letter. Most importantly for our discussion, the name Bulan is given as Sabriel, and he, or in other words, the Khazar commander, is identified as having Jewish origins. However, it is also noted that he did not fully observe the tenets of Judaism, but that he had sincerely converted to Judaism under the influence of his wife and father-in-law.

which religion was the true divine faith. After the Jewish cleric defeated his Christian opponent, the king summoned a highly knowledgeable Muslim scholar to face the Jewish cleric. However, in a Jewish conspiracy, the Muslim scholar was poisoned and killed during his journey to Khazaria by agents hired for this purpose. As a result, unable to present his case before the king, the Khazar ruler was compelled to adopt Judaism.A. Kunik, V. Rosen, *İzvestiya al-Bakri i Drugih Avrorov o Rusi i Slavyanah*, St. Peterburg 1878, p.44.

75 Osman Karatay, "Hazarların Musevileşmesine Dair Bir Belge: Kenize Mektubu", *Karadeniz Araştırmaları*, 18 (2008), p.4-9.

According to Melik Yosif's letter, his sons succeeded Bulan as rulers, followed by Obodia, Yezekiya, and Manassiya, until Obadya's brother Hanukka succeeded. Next came İsaak, Zavulon, Moisey (Menahem), Nissi, I. Aaron (Harun), Mevahem, Benyamin, II. Aaron, and lastly Yosif, the writer of the letter, who lived in the middle of the tenth century.[76] These names are all Jewish. All of the rulers who came after Sabriel, who are listed in the Cambridge Anonymous as Bulan, have Jewish names. This demonstrates that they were not Turkic in origin, and that this cannot be considered a coincidence. Yosif documents Hasday İbn Şafrut's inquiry to the Khazars in his letter: "Which people, family, and tribe are you from?" and the reply was:

> We come from the lineage of Japheth, through his son Togarmah. According to the genealogies of my ancestors, Togarmah had ten sons. Their names are as follows: first Aviyr, second Turis, third Avaz, fourth Uguz, fifth Biz-l, sixth T-r-na, seventh Hazar, eighth Yanur, ninth B-lg-r, and tenth Savir. My lineage comes from the seventh son, Hazar.[77]

It is apparent that Yosif traced his lineage back to the Khazars, and therefore to the Turks. However, Judaism, which lacks a tradition of statehood, is fundamentally a religion rooted in Jewish ethnicity. Fundamentally, it did not permit proselytism (universalism). Although in the past some other tribes had converted to this religion, such acts conflicted with the principle of being the "chosen people." In the Middle Ages, conversion to Judaism was only acceptable if the convert's ancestors were believed to be Jewish (neophytes). The fact that these ancestors were often fictional did not violate the rule.[78] Nonetheless, it is plausible that Yosif, as a ruler who had imprisoned the real Khagan to his palace like a puppet, descended from the Ashina line and possessing no real power still acknowledged the lineage of the original Khazar Turks. Yet, in order to legitimize his rule in the eyes of the people, he did not dare to disregard the Ashina dynasty completely. If this is so, it could be argued that the Cambridge Anonymous can be presented as evidence to support the claim that, following the devastating defeat against the Muslim Arabs in 737, the Khazar Khagan lost his authority. With the backing of Jewish merchants, Bulan, a noble of Jewish descent, who had contributed to the rise in Jewish influence among the ruling elite, seized power in the Khaganate through an uprising.

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76 P. K. Kokovtsev, *Evreysko-Hazarskaya Perepiska v X v.*, p.97-98.

77 P. K. Kokovtsev, *Evreysko-Hazarskaya Perepiska v X v.*, p.91-92.

78 Artamanov, *op.cit.*, p.345-346.



As a result, following the religious conversion, Bulan (also known as Bolan or Bolçan) did not adopt the title of Khagan, but instead became the ruler responsible for governance and execution of power, effectively a *bey* or *melik*.[79] Therefore, a dual kingship system emerged within the Khazar Khaganate. Iban Fadlan describes this situation as follows:

> The ruler of the Khazars is bequethed with the title Khagan. He only leaves his palace once every four months, and strictly for ceremonial purposes. He is known as the Great Khagan. His deputy is called the Khagan Bek. It is the Khagan Bek who is responsible for commanding the army, overseeing the affairs of the state, interacting with the people, and leading the military campaigns. The neighbouring rulers submit to him. Each day, he appears before the Great Khagan with the utmost respect to report on matters of state. When entering the Khagan's presence, he is barefoot and holds a piece of wood in his hand. Upon greeting the Khagan, he burns this piece of wood in front of him. After the burning ritual, he sits to the right of the Khagan, on a throne. It is the Khagan Bek who is responsible for settling disputes, governing the administration, issuing punishments, and effectively managing the affairs of state.[80]

While the Khagan Bek executed his duty of managing the affairs of the state, he was also supported by deputies. The deputy to the Bek was called the "kündür," and the deputy to the kündür was known as the "cavşıgır."[81]

According to al-Mas'udi, an Islamic scholar of the 10th century, the Khazar ruler (el-melik) adopted Judaism during the reign of the Abbasid Caliph Harun al-Rashid (786–814).[82] Al-Mas'udi was referring to the period between 799 and 809, when Obadiah, a Khazar ruler and a grandson of the commander Bulan, who had converted to Judaism in the 730s and taken control of the state's administrative and military affairs despite the Khagan, established Judaism as the official religion of the Khazar Khaganate.[83] Therefore, from the late 8th century into the early 9th century, Judaism slowly became the official religion of the Khazar Khaganate. Obadiah was responsible for commissioning the construction of synagogues and schools in the cities. He was also known to invite Jewish scholars

79 Osman Karatay, *op.cit*., p.9.

80 *İbn Fadlan Seyahatnamesi ve Ekleri*, p.45.

81 Togan, "Hazarlar", *İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, p.406.

82 Mesudî, *Murûc Ez-Zeheb*, p.69.

83 Omeljan Pritsak, "Hazar Hakanlığı'nın Museviliğe Geçişi", p.31.

to the Khaganate, rewarding them handsomely with gold and silver.[84] Indeed, archaeological excavations have unearthed 9th-century coins (dirhams) inscribed not with "Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah," but instead with "Moses is the Messenger of Allah." These findings provide tangible evidence that the Khazars officially adopted Judaism.[85]

From the time that Judaism was adopted by the ruling nobility onwards, the Khazar Khaganate maintained a dual government system. This meant that nominally, the country continued to be ruled by Khagans from the old Ashina family, but the actual governance was undertaken by beys (meliks) descended from Bulan. However, the Khazar Khagans gradually lost their true political power. The early 10th-century Islamic Scholar Ibn Rustah outlined this situation as follows:

> The Khazars have rulers called the *Ishā*ʿ, while the Great Ruler, known as the Khagan, is named *Khazar*. The Khazars' obedience to him is merely verbal. Because of his strength, the true authority rests with the Ishāʿ. For this reason, he pays no heed to anyone above him in military command or rank. The leading Khazar nobles, like the Ishāʿ and commanders, as well as those high officials who share his will, all follow the Jewish faith.[86] Mas'udi writes on this matter as follows: "The Khagan sits in his palace. He does not ride a horse; he does not appear before the ruling class or the people; he does not step outside. He has a harem. He issues no orders, imposes no prohibitions, and does not interfere in the affairs of the state. However, without the Khagan, the Melik cannot govern the country…[87]

By the 10th century, it had become evident that even the Khazar Khagans of Turkic descent were impelled to embrace Judaism. Indeed, the 10th-century Islamic scholar Istakhri narrated the following:

> The Khaganate belongs to a noble class without real power or wealth. When the time comes for someone to take the throne, they accept him as their Khagan without resistance, regardless of his circumstances. A reliable witness once told me about a young man who sold bread in one of their markets. When their ruler died, there was no one

84 P. K. Kokovtsev, *Evreysko-Hazarskaya Perepiska v X v.*, p.80, 97.

85 Roman K. Kovalev, "What Does Historical Numismatics Suggest About the Monetary History of Khazaria in the Ninth Century? – Question Revisited", *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevii*, 13 (2004), p.117.

86 İbn Rüste, "Kitâbü'l-A'lâki'n-Nefîse", p.292.

87 Mesudî, *Murûc Ez-Zeheb*, p.72.



more worthy than him to become Khagan—but he was a Muslim, and the Khaganate was never granted to anyone who was not Jewish.[88]

Iban Fadlan describes that following the Muslims' destruction of a synagogue the Khazar Khagan ordered the demolition of the minaret of the Friday Mosque in Itil and had its muezzins murdered. He even reportedly said, "If I were not afraid that all the synagogues in Muslim lands would be destroyed, I would have torn down the mosque as well."[89] All of this shows that by the early 10th century, the Khazar Khagans had assumed the role of defenders of Judaism.

There is no consensus in the sources regarding the exact date when the Khagans of the Ashina lineage, possibly under pressure from the Khazar Meliks, embraced Judaism. However, in a religious work about the life of the famous Byzantine cleric Constantine the Philosopher (Constantin Krill), it is noted that the Khazar Khagan, likely persuaded to accept Judaism by the Melik and the ruling Jewish elite, requested that the Byzantine Emperor send Christian clerics for a theological debate. Also, it is known that Emperor Michael III sent the renowned Constantine the Philosopher to the Khazar court around 860–861 to promote the conversion of Orthodox Christianity. Constantine engaged in religious debates with Jewish clerics at the Khagan's court, aiming to motivate him to convert. The Khagan, pleased with Constantine's deliberations regarding Christianity, apparently sent him back to Constantinople with a letter to the Byzantine Emperor, giving his word that he would adopt Christianity. This demonstrates that in 861, the Khagan had not as yet embraced Judaism.[90] However, it appears that shortly after this, the Khagan did in fact convert to Judaism. This is confirmed by the early 10th-century Muslim geographer Iban Fadlan and, later in the mid-10th century, by Istakhri—both of whom recorded that the Khazar Khagan was Jewish.

Although by the second half of the 9th century Judaism had become firmly established as the official ideology among the Khazar ruling nobility, it was not widely embraced by the Turkic population. Indeed, Ibn Rustah noted that while the Khagan, the Melik, commanders, and administrators were Jewish, the rest of the Khazars adhered to a religion similar to the traditional Turkic faith.[91] Istakhri

88 İstahrî, Kitab *Mesâlik el-Memâlik*, p.224-225.

89 *İbn Fadlan Seyahatnamesi ve Ekleri*, p.47.

90 A.T. Özcan, *op.cit.*, p.249-255.

91 İbn Rüste, "Kitâbü'l-A'lâki'n-Nefîse", p.292.

detailed that, "The Khazars are Muslim, Christian, and Jewish. Among them are also pagans. The Jews form a minority; the majority are Muslims or Christians. Only the Melik and his entourage embrace the Jewish faith."[92] The same author describes that approximately 10,000 Muslims resided in the Khazar capital, Itil, with about 30 mosques. In contrast, the entourage of the Khazar Melik numbered approximately 4,000.[93] Al-Mas'udi states that the elite army of the Melik, known as the Arsi, comprised of an estimated 7,000 Muslim Turkic soldiers from Khwarezm. Their agreement stipulated that the Arsi were permitted to build mosques and to freely practice their religion. It was also mandatory for the Melik's vizier to originate from among them. In case of conflict between the Khazar Melik and the Muslims, the Arsi had the right to refuse to fight against their co-religionists. Besides the Arsi mercenaries in the Khazar capital, there were also Muslim merchants and artisans who owned other mosques, including a Friday Mosque with a minaret taller than the Melik's palace, as well as medreses.[94]

All of this evidence suggests that Judaism was not widely embraced among the Khazar population. The Jewish community forming the entourage of the Khazar Melik was likely not of Turkic origin but rather a group of Jews, primarily merchants, who came from other lands and lived under his protection.

Judaism was the official ideology of the Khazar Khaganate. However, religious freedom was general respected. For this reason, the Khazar capital was required to have seven judges (kadis). Two presided over Muslim cases; two over Jewish cases; two over Christian cases; and one over the cases of Slavs, Rus, and other pagan peoples.[95]

The Consequences of the Establishment of Jewish Rule in the Khazar Khaganate

In the Khazar Khaganate, the adoption of Judaism and the establishment of a new order through Bulan that conflicted with traditional Turkic beliefs and lineage likely led to internal conflicts. Undoubtedly, the absence of a state tradition within Judaism played a significant role in this turmoil. Rather than uniting the

92 İstahrî, *Kitab Mesâlik el-Memâlik*, p.220-221.

93 İstahrî, *op.cit.*, p.220.

94 Mesudî, *Murûc ez-Zeheb*, p.71.

95 Mesudî, *op.cit.*, p.71; İbn Havkal, *op.cit*, p.340; İstahrî, *op.cit*, p.221.



diverse tribes, it divided them. As a result, it failed to gain the support of the ruling classes and, on the contrary, fueled class conflicts that isolated the ruling elite who adopted this religion from the general populace.[96]

The transfer of power to the Jewish-embracing ruling elite within the Khazar Khaganate subjected the Christian population to pressure of a religious nature. Hence, the bishoprics of Gotya, Sugdeya, Fullı, and Tamatarha in Crimea and Taman, regions with primarily Christian populations, were abolished at the government's request. Only the Bosporus Bishopric, where Christians were also the majority, remained untouched. However, the first resistance to Obodiah's reforms geared at making Judaism the official state religion came from the Christian people of Gotya. With Byzantine support the Christian populace of Gotya broke away from the Khazar Khaganate. Facing internal turmoil, the Jewish Khazar administration was compelled to accept the secession of one of its affiliated cities in Crimea.[97] In the 10th century, the Christian Avars who inhabited the valleys of the Caucasus Mountains in a land called Serir, whose kings were known as Filanshah, were disgruntled with Khazar rule. As a result, they carried out victorious attacks against the Khazars.[98]

Most likely between the years 833 and 843, the Kabars, who were descendants of the Khazars, rebelled against the Khazar bey. This revolt turned into a civil war and was brutally suppressed by the bey. As a result, several Kabars were killed, while those who survived fled north of the Black Sea, to an area then inhabited by the Pechenegs, during the reign of the Byzantine Emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitus. They settled there and formed an alliance with the Hungarians who were living nearby at that time.[99] This war was a rebellion by the Turkish Khazar beys and tarhans who were unhappy with those who had taken power into their hands and transformed the Khagan into a weak but sacred ruler to maintain the unity of the state. They took the view that their rights had been usurped. Joining this rebellion were anti-Judaism Khazar beys as well as the lord of Simlyan Fortress on the right bank of the Don River. The people involved in the uprising were viciously killed by the victors.[100] The Khazar administration, in order to suppress the rebel-

96 Artamanov, *op.cit.*, p.345-346.

97 Artamanov, *op.cit.*, p.418-421.

98 Mesudî, *op.cit.*, p.85.

99 Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De Administrando İmpero*, p.175.

100 Artamanov, *op.cit.*,ps.418.

lion, sought assistance not from the anti-Judaism Turkish tribes within their borders but rather from the Pecheneg and Oghuz tribes outside their territory.[101] This situation was also of importance because it laid the foundation for the invasion of Khazar lands by the Pecheneg and Oghuz nomads.

On the one hand, Jews under pressure, particularly from the Byzantine Empire, were flocking to the Khazar Khaganate, while on the other hand, the adoption of Judaism became a driving force for new migrations among the Khazar Turks who still preserved the old Sky-God (Gök-Tanrı) belief and those Turks who had embraced Islam. As a result, a wave of migration took place towards the middle course of the Volga (Idil) River, where the Bulgars, who had by then mostly adopted Islam resided, facilitated by Muslim merchants.[102] By the beginning of the 10th century, the Muslim ruler (Ilteber) of the Volga Bulgars rebelled to free his people from the Jewish Khazar control and sought support by appealing to the Abbasid Caliph al-Muqtadir.[103]

Therefore, internal unrest and migrations began to sway the balance of political power. Ultimately, the adoption of Judaism—a new religion that favored a different ethnicity, clashed with Turkish lineage, customs, the ideal of Kızılelma, and traditional state administration. Thus, Judiasm failed to muster popular acceptance, and became a trigger for the weakening and gradual decline of the Khazar Khaganate.

The Submission of the Magyars under Khazar Khaganate Rule

Among the steppe peoples who came under the dominion of the Khazar Khaganate in the early 9th century were the Hungarians. Originally a Finno-Ugric tribe, the Hungarians migrated from their old homelands on the forested slopes of the Ural Mountains down to the steppes. Around the 460s, following the Hun migrations, they crossed the Volga River and lived alongside the Ogur Turks who had moved westward. Because they lived under the rule of the On-Ogurs in particular, they were known by various names such as On-Ogur (Ongur, Ungri, Ongri, Ungor, Ungaros, Hungarus, Hongrois, Venger, etc.). Due to their subjugation under the Khazars, they were also referred to as Turks. Additionally, the Kabar tribe, which was part of the Khazar Turks and incorporated into the Hungarian

[101] Artamanov, *op.cit.*, p.421.

[102] Dinçer Koç, *op.cit.*, p.102.

[103] Dinçer Koç, *op.cit.*, p.150-151.



tribal confederation, played an important role in influencing Hungarian culture with Turkic elements. Many Hungarian words of Turkic (origin; such as ökör (ox), tino (calf), bika (bull), tyuk (chicken), kos (ram), kecske (goat), tarlo (field), eke (plow), arok (ditch), buza (wheat), árpa (barley), alma (apple), sereg / cerig (army), törvény (law), tanú (witness), bélyeg (stamp/document), erdő (forest), kék / gök (blue), sárga (yellow), and others) are believed to be remnants from the period when the Hungarians lived under the rule of the Ogurs and Khazars.[104] The area where the Hungarians once settled in the Urals, toward the middle Volga region—also inhabited by the Bashkir Turks—was referred to as "Magna Hungaria" (Great Hungary) by Hungarian monks during the Mongol invasions of the 13th century.[105] Turkologists have pointed out the similarities between the names of Hungarian clans and the tribal and lineage names of the Bashkir Turks, highlighting the historical closeness between the Hungarians and the Bashkir Turks.[106]

The most significant historical details regarding the period of when the Hungarians were under Khazar rule is found in the work of the Byzantine Emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitus. According to Porphyrogenitus, at the beginning of the 9th century, the Hungarians lived in territories named after the first voivode Lebedia* , and was divided into seven tribes. The Hungarians sided with the Khazars and they fought their enemies together for three years. Due to the military manpower provided by the Hungarians, the Khazar Khagan gave a Khazar noblewoman as a wife to Lebedia to bear him children. However, this marriage did not produce offspring. Around the same time, the Pechenegs, who declared war on the Khazars, were defeated and forced to desert their homeland. Following this, they defeated the Hungarians and invaded their lands. Some of the Hungarians, forced to leave their homeland, migrated to Iran, while others, led by Lebedia, moved westward and settled in the region later known as Etelköz** , where the Pechenegs resided.

Subsequently, the Khazar Khagan summoned Lebedia through his envoys and was duly impressed by his strength, skill, and noble lineage, declaring he would recognize him as the ruler of the Hungarians. This recognition was of course subject to Lebedia accepting his sovereignty. Although Lebedia was somewhat pleased with the Khagan's offer, he declined to become the Hungarian ruler. Instead, he

* The country of the Hungarians referred to as Lebedia was most likely the region between the Don and Donets rivers. See Peter B. Golden, Türk Halkları Tarihine Giriş, pp. 272–273..

** Etelköz means 'between the rivers.' This was a term bequeathed by Constantine Porphyrogenitus referring to the region between the Don, Dniester and Prut rivers, where the Hungarians settled under Khazar rule.

104 İbrahim Kafesoğlu, *op.cit.*, p.174-175.

105 S.A. Aninskiy, *İzvestiya Vengerskih Missionerov XIII-XIV vv. o Tatarah i Vostoçnoy Evrope*, İstoriçeskiy Arhiv, T. III, İzdatelstvo Akademii Nauk ASSR, Moskva-Leningrad 1940, p.81.

106 Peter B. Golden, *Hazar Çalışmaları*, p.85-86.

proposed another voivode, Almos, or his son Árpád, as a candidate to the Khazar Khagan. Ultimately, the Khagan chose Árpád due to his wisdom and strength. Subsequently, according to Khazar tradition, Árpád was lifted on a shield and proclaimed as the ruler or lord of the Hungarians. A few years later, the Pechenegs attacked Etelköz again, defeated the Hungarians, and once more forced them to leave their lands.[107] Afterwards, it is known that under the leadership of Árpád, the Hungarians migrated into Central Europe and settled in the region of Pannonia, between the Danube and Tisza rivers.

The Pechenegs' Invasion of the North of the Black Sea"

Pechenegs were Turkic people who owed allegiance to the West Göktürk Khaganate. They left their lands on the upper Irtysh in the 8th century and came to settle their tribes on the lower Syr Darya and around Aral Sea. Among all Pecheneg tribes, three of them had aristocratic clans Irtim, Chor, and Yula bearing the name Kangar (Kenger). In the last part of the 8th century, the Oghuz came from the east and attacked Pechenegs. This made them move westward over the Ural River. Large Pecheneg groups spread out in this wide area between the Ural and Volga Rivers. In the early 9th century, Pecheneg raids greatly jeopardized the safety of Khazar eastern trade routes; they could take control over the route to Khwarezm! This caused great concern in the Khazar Khaganate. The Khazars first tried to fight alone against the Pechenegs, but when they didn't achieve the desired results, the Khazar elite allied with Oghuz from the east against Pechenegs.[108] The Pechenegs could not withstand the combined attacks of their enemies and in 895 they turned to the west, towards the Volga. They attacked the Magyars, who were in the lands of Etelközü, and drove them out.[109] Thus, as the Magyars moved through the Carpathian Mountains and into Pannonia, their modern homeland, the Pechenegs became immediate masters of this vast steppe from Volga to Danube. It also meant an end to Khazar rule over the northwestern steppe by the Black Sea, where the

[107] Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De Administrando İmpero*, pp.170-174.

[108] Akdes Nimet Kurat, *Peçenek Tarihi*, Devlet Basımevi, Istanbul, 1937, pp.22-42.

[109] Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De Administrando İmpero*, p.171-173; Akdes Nimet Kurat, *op.cit.*, pp.43-50.



Pechenegs were. By the start of the 10th century, the Khazars were in constant conflict with the Pechenegs.[110]

From the Russian chronicles, we learn that the Pechenegs first appeared on the Russian borders in 915 and made peace with Prince Igor.[111] The Pechenegs destroyed settlements and artefacts linked to Khazar-Bulgar archaeological culture around the Don region and Azov. These were areas inhabited by many Bulgars and steppes that were more vulnerable by nature. These attacks dealt a massive blow to the region's economy, as one of their primary means of livelihood was achieved by carrying out raids.[112] Due to this instability, at the beginning of the 10th century, the populace residing in the Don basin revolted and began to leave the steppes en masse.

The Khazars and The Alans

The Alans were an Iranian people who were believed to be the ancestors of the contemporary Caucasian Ossets. The Alans played a critical role in the history of the Khazar Khaganate. The Alans were forced into the Caucasus Mountains by the Huns and subsequently settled in the valleys along the upper and middle passes of the Terek and Kuban rivers. According to the Cambridge Anonymous source, the Khazar prince decided to make peace with the Alan king, who was the strongest and toughest neighbor among all the other peoples surrounding the Khazar Khaganate.[113] According to al- Masudi, the commanding Alan king possessed an army of 30,000 horsemen.[114] The main route connecting the North Caucasus steppes to the regions beyond the Caucasus and the Black Sea passed through Alan territory. For this reason, both the Byzantine Empire and the Khazar Khaganate sought to keep them under their control or at least within their sphere of influence.

During the reign of Benyamin, the Khazar Melik in the 910s, the nomadic As who were a tribe of the Alans, Turks, and Pechenegs, persuaded by Byzantium,

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110 Ramazan Şeşen, *İslâm Coğrafyacılarına Göre Türkler ve Türk Ülkeleri*, TTK Publications, Ankara 2001, p.82.

111 *Povest Vremennıh Let*, pp.30-31; Muallâ Uydu Yücel, *İlk Rus Yıllıklarına Göre Türkler*, pp.99-100.

112 S.A. Pletneva, "Koçevniki Vostoçnoevropeyskih Stepey v X-XIII vv.", *Stepi Evrazii v Epohu Srednevekovya*, Otv. Red. S.A. Pletneva, İzdatelstvo Nauka, Moskva 1981, p.214.

113 Karatay, *op.cit*., p.9.

114 Mesudî, *op.cit.*, p.87.

initiated attacks against the Khazars. In order to defeat this syndicate of enemies, Benyamin sought assistance from the Alans. Some of these Alans had previously been under Khazar rule, and some had even converted to Judaism. In the end, with the support of the Alans, the Khazars were victorious in defeating their enemies.[115]

The rulers of the Byzantine Empire adopted a strategy of using religion as a means to bring the Alans under their influence. According to al-Masudi, the kings of the land of al-Lân whose capital was Mağas, was initially pagan but had converted to Christianity following the spread of Islam and the Abbasids.[116] The Byzantines pursued a policy of promulgating Christianity among the Alans via the Abkhazian princes under their influence. They achieved a certain degree of success by managing to convert the Alan rulers to Christianity. According to the Muslim geographer Ibn Ruste, who wrote in the early 10th century, despite the fact that the Alan king was a true Christian, his subjects primarly chose to remain pagan.[117] After the Christianization of the Alan Kingdom's ruling nobility, even if only partially, the Byzantine Emperor began to incite them against the Khazars. As a result, the Alans declared war on the Khazar Khaganate. However, the Khazar Melik Aaron sided with the Oghuz and defeated the Alans. He even went as far as to capture the Alan king but apparently treated him with respect while in captivity. Aaron honored the Alan king by using marriage as a diplomatic tool and married his daughter to his own son, Joseph. After this, the Alan king swore loyalty to Aaron, who then sent him back to his own country. From that point on, the neighbouring nations were in fear of the Khazars.[118] The Alan King, again came under Khazar control, and in line with this, denounced Christianity in the year H. 320 (A.D. 932) and expelled the bishops and priests who had been sent to his lands by the Byzantine Emperor.[119] In an act of revenge, the Byzantine Emperor Romanus Lecapenus, in 943-944, oppressed the Jews in his realm to convert to Christianity and began a strategy of persecuting them. As a result, some of the Jews fled from Byzantium to Khazar territory.[120]

115 P. K. Kokovtsev, *Evreysko-Hazarskaya Perepiska v X v.*, pp.116-117.

116 Mesudî, *op.cit.*, p.86.

117 İbn Rüste, "Kitâbü'l-A'lâki'n-Nefîse", p.299.

118 Karatay, *op.cit.*, p.9.

119 Mesudî, *op.cit.*, p.86.

120 Mesudî, *op.cit.*, p.69.



It is evident that during the reign of Byzantine Emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitus, the Khazar-Alan alliance was once again breached.[121] Accordingly, the Emperor relayed to his sons the critical importance of the Alans in shattering Khazar control over the North Caucasus and Crimea with the following words:

> The Oghuz were capable of initiating conflict with their neighboring Khazars. Likewise, the King of the Alans had the potential to engage in hostilities against the Khazars. Should they decide to pillage the Nine Climes of Khazaria, which are situated quite close to Alan territory, they would inflict severe destruction and could lay claim to these nine regions, essential for the Khazars' survival and prosperity. If the King of Alans opted not to pursue peace with the Khazars but instead relied on the alliance with the Roman Emperor, it would have served his interests better. Eventually, in the event that the Khazars breached the peace and alliance established with the Emperor, the King of Alans might have launched a surprise attack when the Khazars were traveling through Sarkel, the Climes, and Chersonesus, catching them off guard and causing substantial damage. The Khazar leaders found it challenging to maintain cohesion among their subjects, therefore Chersonesus and the Climes seized this opportunity to forge a significant and enduring peace. Due to the fact that the Khazars would fear potential assaults from the Alans, they would not be able to mount a military campaign against both Chersonesus and the Climes at the same time, thus, they would work to uphold the peace.[122]

The Russians and the Demise of the Khazar Khaganate

Two key elements significantly contributed to the decline of the Khazar Khaganate. Firstly, the ruling class's conversion to Judaism resulted in a lack of cohesion within the state. Secondly, invasions from the Pechenegs in the east and the Rus in the northwest delivered serious defeats to the Khazars, diminishing their influence. This decline also resulted in the loss of crucial financial inflows, as they forfeited their command over vital trade pathways.

The semi-mythical founder of the Rus state, Rurik, arrived in 862 at Sambata, a Khazar stronghold situated along the middle Dnieper River, and forged commercial and political ties with the Khazars as a subordinate entity. Even prior to the formation of the Kiev Rus' principality, the rulers of Kiev had been paying

[121] Peter B. Golden, *Hazar Çalışmaları*, pp.113-114.

[122] Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De Administrando İmpero*, p.80.

tribute to the Khazars. In fact, one neighborhood within the city was designated "Kozari" in reference to the Khazars. However, following the conquest of Kiev by Oleg, Rurik's successor, this tributary relationship came to an end. Thereafter, the princes of Kiev pursued an aggressive expansionist strategy towards the Idil area, driven by lucrative trading routes that extended northward via the Caspian Sea and the Volga. This led them directly into conflict with the Khazar Khaganate. Between 882 and 885, Oleg gained control over the Slavic tribes of Polyan, Drevlyan, Severyan, and Radimich, which had previously paid tribute to the Khazars, effectively halting those payments.[123]

The Rus' carried out their initial raid into Khazar-controlled territories during the reign of Hasan b. Zayd in Tabaristan (864–884). However, this first assault ended in failure. The Rus launched two more unsuccessful assaults on the shores of the Caspian Sea in 910 and 911, resulting in heavy losses.[124] However, despite this, the Rus' chose not to cease their attacks. At the onset of the 10th century, the Muslim presence and influence within the Khazar Khaganate had notably surged. As stated by al-Mas'udi, in the year 300 AH (912 CE), following the Khazar leader's consent (in exchange for a share of the plunder), Rus' raiders commenced assaults on the southern coasts of the Caspian Sea, targeting areas such as Gorgan, Tabaristan, Persia, and Azerbaijan. They killed numerous Muslims in these territories and seized considerable amounts of wealth and captives. A portion of the loot was sent back to the Khazar leader. Several months later, the raiders began their return. Upon realizing this, the Muslim community within the Khazar domain urged their ruler to withdraw his Rus' allies to facilitate retribution for their fallen compatriots. The Khazar monarch, unable to stop this, granted their request. As a consequence, many Rus' fell to the Muslims, and the remaining five thousand were ultimately defeated by the Burtas and subsequently by the Muslim Bulgars.[125]

In the 930s, the interactions with the Rus' were influenced by the religious conflict involving the Khazars and Byzantium. A letter from a Jewish individual in Khazaria indicated that Byzantine Emperor Romanos Lekapenos, who ruled from 929 to 944, had instigated a severe persecution of Jews living in his territory, a point also noted by al-Mas'udi. In defense of his fellow believers, the ruler of the Khazars began exerting pressure on Christians in his domain.

[123] Yücel, *İlk Rus Yıllıklarına Göre Türkler*, pp.88-89.

[124] Artamanov, *op.cit.*, p.475.

[125] Mesudî, *op.cit.*, pp.75-77.



Consequently, the Byzantine administration sought the Rus' prince's assistance, offering him valuable gifts to encourage action against the Khazars. The Rus' launched an assault on the Khazar city of Samkerts in Taman, managing to capture it through deception, obtain a significant amount of loot, and then retreat. Meanwhile, unable to locate the Rus', Pesah, the regional governor known as "bulshitza" (balik-ci) who governed the area around the Kerch Strait, initiated attacks on Byzantine territories in Crimea. The Khazars captured three cities and numerous settlements before besieging Chersonesus. They then moved against the Rus' prince Helgu, leading the defeated Rus' to ally with the Khazars in their campaign against the Byzantines. During this period, the Rus' acknowledged Khazar supremacy.[126] M. I. Artamonov suggests that it was improbable for the Rus' to have been under the dominion of the Khazars during the 10th century. The Jewish account likely alluded to the peace agreement established between Prince Igor of Kiev and the Khazars prior to his military expedition in 941, which was intended to safeguard his territory.[127]

In 943-944, the Rus initiated another assault on the coastal areas of the Caspian Sea. Their primary objective was the city of Berdea in Azerbaijan, which they seized and looted for approximately six months before withdrawing. The Khazar Khagan did not make any effort to hinder the Rus.'[128]

The Kievan Rus Principality and its vigorous leader, Svyatoslav Igorevich, were instrumental in the downfall of the Khazar Khaganate. In 964, Svyatoslav successfully asserted dominance over the final Slav tribe loyal to the Khazars, known as the Vyatichi. During this period, the trade pathway stretching from Kiev to Asia through the Volga River and the Caspian Sea posed significant challenges for Russian merchants, as it was perilous due to the Khazars' predatory actions against Russian traders.[129] In order to repel this threat, Svyatoslav initially formed a military pact with the Oghuz Yabgu against the Khazars.[130] Svyatoslav subsequently arrived at the Volga River in 965. Passing through the Volga Bulgar set-

126 Kokovtsev, *Evreysko-Hazarskaya Perepiska v X v.*, pp.118-120.

127 Artamanov, *op.cit.*, p.481.

128 Artamanov, *op.cit.*, p.483.

129 İ. A. Zaiçkin, İ. N. Poçkayev, *Russkaya İstoriya Populyarnıy Oçerk IX – Seredina XVIII v.*, İzdatelstvo Mısl, Moskva 1992, p.39.

130 S.G. Agacanov, *Oğuzlar*, trans. E. N. Necef, A. Annaberdiyev, Selenge Publications, Istanbul 2004, p.222.

tlements, he travelled downstream toward the Khazar capital, the city of Itil. According to the testimony of the Russian chronicles, the rest of Svyatoslav's Khazar campaign unfolded as follows:

> In the year 965, Svyatoslav advanced against the Kozars (Khazars). When the Kozars learned of Svyatoslav's approach, they mobilized to face him led by their Khagan, and the two armies engaged in battle. Svyatoslav triumphed over the Kozars and took their city, Belovezh (Sarkel). He also prevailed against the Yas (Alans) and the Kasogs (Circassians).[131]

The year of the military expedition in which the Rus' commanded by Svyatoslav, struck a significant blow to the Khazar Khaganate in 965 is noted by Ibn Hawqal as 968/969 AD. He states that during this campaign, the Rus' also caused extensive devastation to the previous Khazar capital, Semender, renowned for its vineyards and gardens located in Dagestan.[132] From this, it is evident that the campaign initiated by the Rus in 965 persisted for several additional years following the defeat of the Khazar Khagan, during which Khazar lands were consistently attacked. This period also signifies the conclusion of the Khazar Khaganate as an autonomous entity.[133]

When the Rus' launched their invasion of Khazar lands in 965, which persisted for many years, the inhabitants of Itil sought sanctuary on the islands of Bāb al-Abwāb in the Caspian Sea and Siyahkuh (Mangyshlak), doing their utmost to shield themselves while nervously hoping for the retreat of the Rus'.[134] Some of the Khazars also took refuge in Shirvan, and after a while, many of them wished to return to their homeland with the assistance of the Shirvanshah, Muhammad b. Ahmad al-Azdī. They expressed a willingness to submit to the Rus and pay tribute in exchange for being allowed to return.[135]

It appears that during the same period, the Oghuz Turks, who had allied with the Rus, also launched an assault on the Khazars. The historian Ibn Miskawayh from the 11th century, followed by Ibn al-Athir, mentions that in 965, the Turks attacked the Khazars without noting the involvement of the Rus. According to their

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131 *Povest Vremennıh Let*, p.44; "İpatyevskaya Letopis", *PSRL*, T. II, İzdanie Vtoroe, İzdannoe po Vısoçayşemu Poveleniyu İmperatorskoyu Arheografiçeskoyu Kommissieyu, S-Peterburg 1908, p.53.

132 İbn Havkal, *10. Asırda İslâm Coğrafyası*, p.343.

133 A. P. Novoseltsev, *op.cit.*, p.230.

134 İbn Havkal, *10. Asırda İslâm Coğrafyası*, p.343.

135 İbn Havkal, *10. Asırda İslâm Coğrafyası*, p.347.



accounts, the Khazars sought aid from the Khwarazmians, who agreed to assist them only if the Khazars converted to Islam. As a result, the Khazars abandoned Judaism and embraced Islam, which reportedly included their leader, as stated by Ibn al-Athir.[136] The Russian chronicles narrate that in the year 986, the Jewish Khazars dispatched their religious leaders along with envoys to Prince Vladimir of Kiev in an effort to persuade him to adopt their faith.[137] After this point, historical sources provide fewer details about the Khazars.

The Khazars in the 11th–12th Centuries

Historical records from the 11th and 12th centuries are not in consensus regarding the Khazars. By the 11th century, the capital, Itil, had fallen into dissaray.[138] By the mid-11th century, the expansive Kipchak tribes moving in from the east had driven the Pechenegs towards the west, establishing themselves as the new dominators of the steppe region that extended from the lower Volga River to the northern coastline of the Black Sea.[139] Thus, the political cohesion of the Khazars was entirely fragmented. By the 12th century, Saksin had risen in the lower Volga area. While a segment of the population consisted of Muslim Khazars, the overwhelming majority was composed of Oghuz Turks.[140]

Historical records do not indicate that the Khazars played a notable part in Dagestan during the 11th and 12th centuries. In 1064, three thousand Khazar families moved to the Transcaucasia area.[141] The Khazars in the Don area, particularly those located in Sarkel, fell under the authority of the Rus Principality of Tmutarakan, which had previously been theirs. In 1024, Khazar troops were part of the army of Prince Mstislav Vladimirovich as he battled for supremacy against his sibling Yaroslav.[142] The Khazars are last referenced in the Russian chronicles regarding the actions of Prince Oleg Svyatoslavich, who was delivered to Byzantium

136 İbnü'l-Esîr, *op.cit.*, VIII, p.486; Togan, "Hazarlar", p.400; Dunlop, *op.cit.*, pp.262-263.

137 *Povest Vremennıh Let*, p.58.

138 Togan, *op.cit.*, p.401.

139 Novoseltsev, *op.cit.*, p.231.

140 Ebû Hâmid Muhammed el-Gırnâtî, *Gırnâtî Seyahatnâmesi (Tuhfetu'l-Elbâb ve Nuhbetu'l-A'câb)*, trans. Ed. Fatih Sabuncu, Yeditepe Publications, Istanbul 2011, pp.186-187.

141 V. F. Minorskiy, *İstoriya Şirvana i Derbenda X-XI vv.*, Moskova 1963, p.75.

142 *Povest Vremennıh Let*, p.101.

in 1079 and again in 1083.[143] It is believed that some Khazar Jews migrated to Central European countries and eventually became part of the Ashkenazi Jewish communities.[144] At the same time, there are theories suggesting that the Karaites, a Jewish community whose numbers have greatly diminished today, are the descendants of the Khazars.[145]

Consequently, after the demise of the Khazar Khaganate, various nomadic Turkic tribes, including the Oghuz, Kipchaks, Pechenegs, Berendeys, and Karakalpaks, invaded the steppes situated north of the Caspian and Black Seas. The control of the Volga area shifted to the Muslim Volga Bulgars, while the Alans regained their sovereignty in the North Caucasus.

In summary, from the mid-7th century to the latter part of the 9th century over a span of 300 years the Khazar Khaganate was a significant political, military, and commercial entity located at the intersection of Europe and Asia. During this period, it acted as an essential balancing force between two dominant powers of the medieval age: The Byzantine Empire and the Arab Caliphate. The Khazars effectively halted the progression of Muslim Arabs into Eastern Europe through their dominance over the North Caucasus. Their robust control over trade routes linking the Silk Road to Eastern Europe greatly contributed to the economic success of the Khaganate. Simultaneously, it fostered the evolution of Turkic steppe culture in the region north of the Black Sea and impacted various ethnic communities, including Ukrainians, Russians, North Caucasian peoples, and Hungarians. A noteworthy legacy of the Khazar Khaganate in Turkish and global history was its representation of the fundamental Turkic value of religious tolerance. It permitted the unhindered practice of not only the ancient Tengri religion but also Islam, Christianity, and Judaism, a period often termed Pax Khazarica. Moreover, the Khazars are a unique Turkic state historically because they adopted Judaism as their official faith, thereby distinguishing them from other Turkic states. Ironically, this uniqueness would later contribute to the rapid decline of the Khaganate.

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143 *Povest Vremennıh Let*, p.133-134.

144 Dunlop, *op.cit.*, pp.280-282.

145 A. Zajaczkowski, "Hazar Kültürü ve Varisleri", trans. Çağatay Bediî, *Belleten*, 27/107, (Ankara, 1963), pp.477-483.

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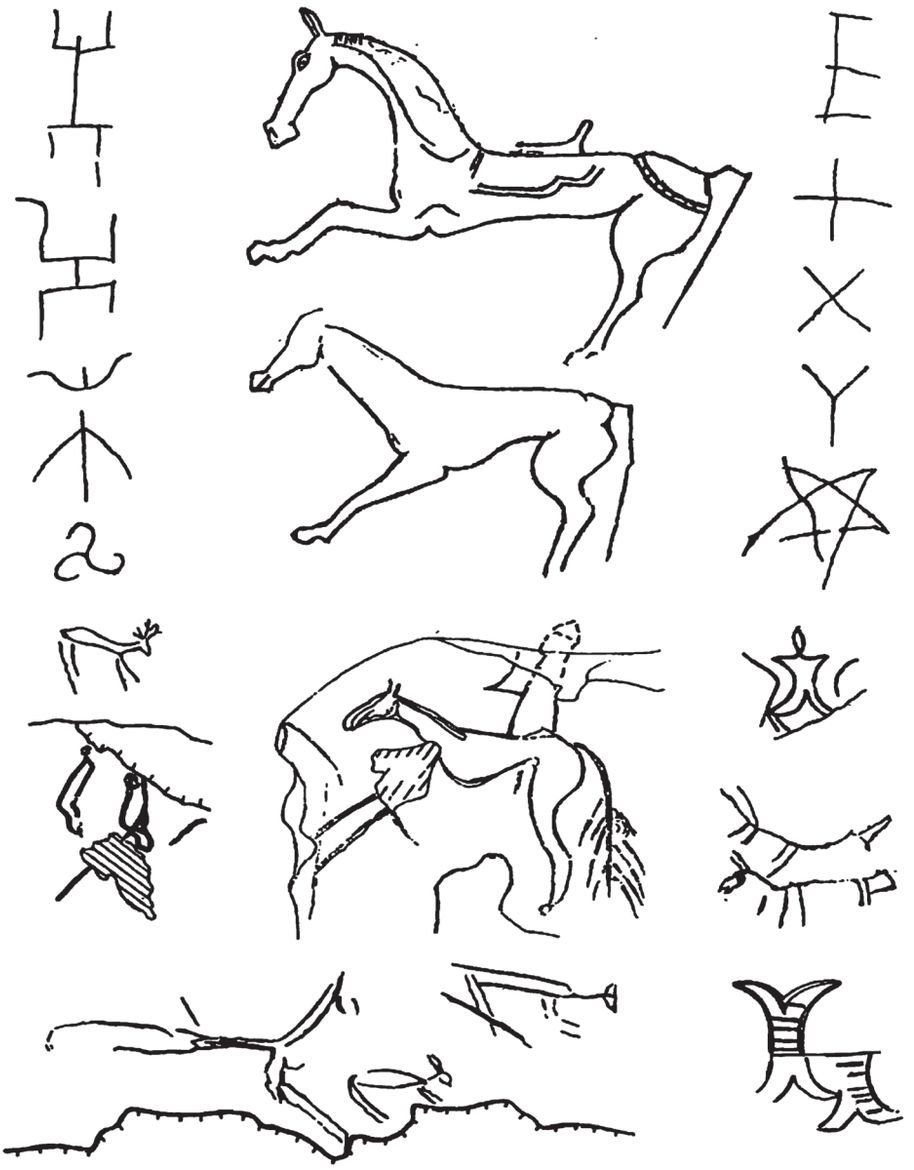
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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Various depictions and signs of the Khazars found in the Mayatsk fortress



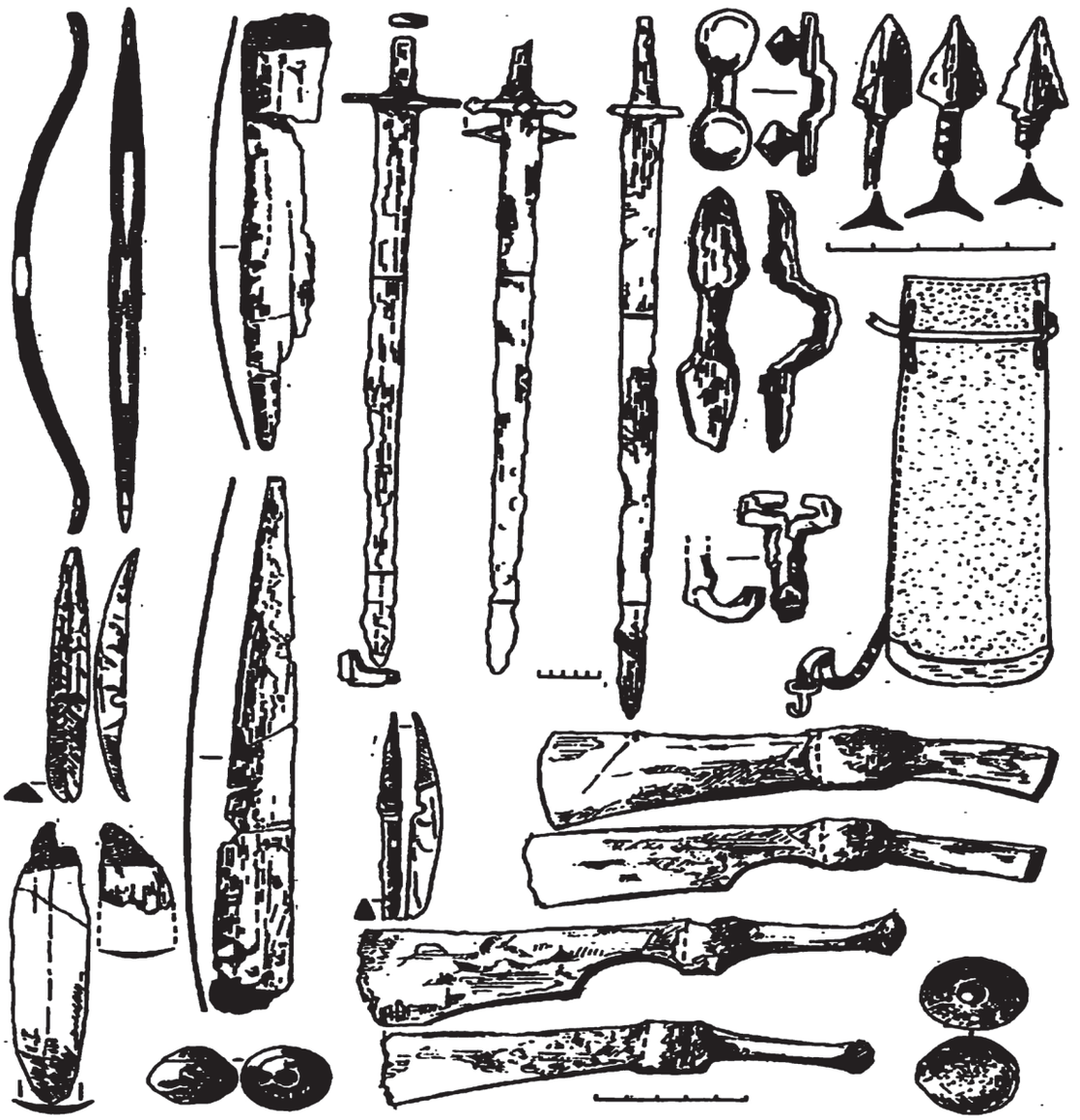
Source: S. A. Pletneva, *Oçerki Hazarskoy Arheologii*, Moskova, 1999, image 42.

Appendix 2: Depiction of cavalry burial No. 52 in the Dmitriyevsky cemetery



Source: S. A. Pletneva, *Oçerki Hazarskoy Arheologii*, Moskova, 1999, image 53.

Appendix 3: Weapon remains belonging to Khazar warriors



Source: S. A. Pletneva, *Oçerki Hazarskoy Arheologii*, Moskova, 1999, image 13.

Appendix 4: Khazar dirham inscribed with Musa, Messenger of God



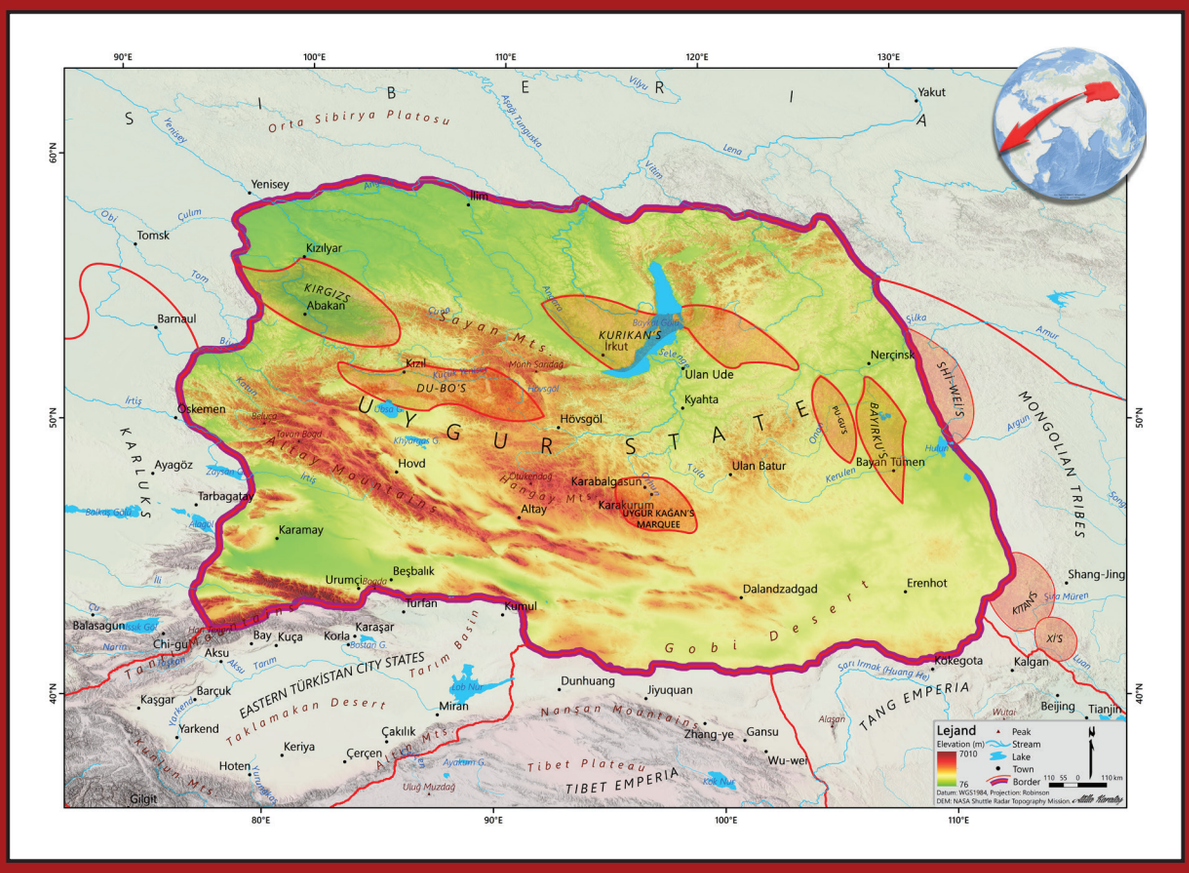
Source: Nanouschka Myrberg Burström, "Money, Coins, and Archaeology: Trends in Scholarship", *Money and Coinage in the Middle Ages,* ed. Rory Naismith, Brill, 2018, p.251.

Appendix 5: The Khazars and neighbouring communities



Source: Narciss Mobini vd., "Identical MHC Markers in Non-Jewish Iranian and Ashkenazi Jewish Patients with Pemphigus Vulgaris: Possible Common Central Asian Ancestral Origin", *Human Immunology*, 57/1, (1997), p.63.

The Uyghur State



Source: Atilla Karataş Collection



THE UYGHUR STATE

(744-840)

Kürşat YILDIRIM*

Introduction

Circa 600, the Uyghurs rebelled against the Göktürks. Following 605, they began to collaborate with other tribes, forming the first cohesive "Uyghur" confederation. After 646, the Uyghurs were significantly influenced by Chinese powers, yet they again fell under the Göktürk sway after 682. As the Göktürk Khaganate experienced decline, the Uyghurs, alongside the Basmil and Karluk tribes, began to pursue independence in 742. Eventually, in 744, they achieved the establishment of their own Khaganate, forming the "Nine Oghuz and Ten-Uyghur" confederation within the Turkic steppes. The Uyghur Khaganate's territory extended eastward to the Mongol Shiwei tribes, westward to the Altai Mountains, and southward to the Gobi Desert, thereby allowing the Uyghurs to claim all the lands previously held by the Huns. This Khaganate also marked the final Turkic state created in the area known as Ötüken. Following the collapse of this khaganate, Ötüken largely fell outside Turkic dominion.

The state established by the Uyghurs represented a classic steppe-style Turkic formation. This "Khaganate" can be seen as a direct descendant of the Göktürk

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Khaganate. Its population and land were equivalent to those of the Göktürks, with state structure, culture, customs, language, religion, and various other aspects being nearly indistinguishable; the primary difference lay in the ruling dynasty. While the Göktürks were governed by the Ashina clan, the leadership of the Uyghurs resided with the Yaglakar clan. The Uyghurs successfully brought all the tribes from the ancient Turkic steppes under their control. The main foreign entities surrounding them were the Chinese and Tibetans. Internally, the Uyghurs faced challenges from other Turkic groups including the Kyrgyz, Karluks, and Shatuo. A pivotal moment in the Khaganate's history was the Uyghurs' consistent involvement in quelling uprisings within China. In exchange for their assistance, they received considerable tributes labeled as "gifts," secured trade privileges, and earned the right to traverse Chinese lands freely, resulting in significant economic advantages. In some cases, the Uyghur crown prince was deemed equivalent in rank to the Chinese emperor. Through skilled diplomacy, the Uyghurs sustained their influence over China for an extended period.

Other crucial events in Uyghur history encompass Bögü Khagan's conversion to Manichaeism, the increasing power of Sogdians within their governance, the succession of the Yaglakar dynasty by a Buyruk Bashi ("Prime Minister") from the Ediz tribe in 795, the cessation of Tibetan territorial expansion, and the proliferation of Uyghur trade networks across East Asia. These occurrences stand out as the most significant milestones in Turkish history throughout the Uyghur Khaganate period. Following the downfall of the Khaganate in 840, the Uyghurs dispersed to various regions, entering new cultural realms and embracing different religions. There exists some ambiguity in the academic discourse regarding this transition. Specifically, the Uyghurs of East Turkestan engaged in a distinctly different historical and cultural trajectory. As a result, there have been instances where details related to the Turfan Uyghurs who migrated south and founded a state in a much later timeframewere incorrectly attributed to the Khaganate period, leading to misconceptions and erroneous interpretations.

The Term Uyghur

The term "Uyghur" is first mentioned in Turkish documents in 716, coinciding with Bilge Khagan's efforts to quell the Turkish tribes. In reaction to the Khagan's assault, "the Uyghur Ilteber retreated eastward alongside approximately a



hundred troops."[1] The name "Uyghur" only appears in the Orkhon Inscriptions. In the Uyghur Khaganate inscriptions discovered at Tes, Tariat, and Shine Us, the terms Uyghurmuş, Uyghur Kaghan, On Uyghur (Ten Uyghurs), and Uyghur Bodunu (Uyghur people) are mentioned (Tes, South/4, North/5; Shine Us, North/3; Tariat, North/2).In addition to this, in the Iyme Inscription located on the bank of the Hemchik River southwest of Tuva in Siberia, the term "Uyghur Han" is found.[2] This may be the sole stone carving outside Mongolia that features the name "Uyghur. " One of the oldest written records that includes the name Uyghur can be found in the Turfan manuscripts. In a religious text associated with Manichaeism discovered in that area, possibly from the 10th century, the expression *ïdduq on uyγur ilintä* ("In the land of the Ten Uyghurs of Iduk") is referenced.[3] Thus, the name "Uyghur" starts to become more commonplace in the sources, especially in Islamic sources, where it generally started to be mentioned together with the Oghuz.

The meaning of the name "Uyghur" is explained differently in various primary sources. These explanations carry unique historical value but must be treated with caution. Chronologically, the earliest narration appears in Chinese sources on two different occasions. According to these records, in the years 788 and 809, Uyghur Khagans sent envoys requesting that the Chinese transcription of their name from **Huihe** *(literally "return" + "wise/clever")* be changed to **Huigu** *(literally "return" + "falcon/hawk").* This new term was said to denote *"swift and agile like a hawk."*[4] This origin essentially reflects the literal dictionary definitions of the Chinese characters. Unless a text is discovered containing alternative characters that can validate this definition, and unless a relevant interpretation for the term "Uyghur" is determined, it should be articulated in this manner.

In the *Dîvânu Lugâti ĭ-Türk*, Uyghur is referenced as a province. This indicates that Uyghur denoted a region comprised of five cities. When Alexander the Great approached the Uyghur province and witnessed the army dispatched by the Turkish Khagan, he was amazed and remarked, "i:nan xu:z̲ xurend," which translates to "they can sustain themselves; they do not require the food of others." Consequently,

1 Bilge Kağan, East/37; Muharrem Ergin, *Orhun Abideleri*, Boğaziçi Publishing, Istanbul 2009, p.51.

2 İ. Kormuşin-E. Mozioğlu-R. Alimov-F. Yıldırım, *Yenisey-Altay-Kırgızistan Yazıtları ve Kâğıda Yazılı Runik Belgeler*, BilgeSu Publishing, Ankara 2016, p.186.

3 A. von Gabain-W. Winter, *Türkische Turfantexte*, C. IX, Berlin 958, p.18 (Z. 90).

4 *Jiu Tang Shu*, Zhonghua Shuju, Beijing 1997, pp.5207-5208, 5210; *Xin Tang Shu*, Zhonghua Shuju, Beijing 1997, pp.6123, 6129.

the province received the name Xuẓxur.[5] Thus, the name transformed into Uyghur and has been linked to Alexander's phrase in Persian: *"inan hôd hôrende."*[6] In this regard, this connection is likely a hypothesis. However, the interpretation of the term as "self-sufficient" carries significance for us. Another key explanation is noted in Cami'ü't-Tevârih. As per Cami'ü't-Tevârih, Oghuz Khagan bestowed the name "Uyghur" upon the tribe that was allied with and supported him. The significance of this name was "joined with us, assisted and consented."[7] Accordingly, the name Uyghur means "uniting," "helping," or "agreeing." Similarly, in the Oghuz Epic found in *Cami'ü't-Tevârih*, it denotes the meaning of "awakening" or "one who follows the path."[8] *In Şecere-i Türk,* a similar explanation is given, describing it as *"attaching" or "awakening."*[9] In the Tibetan summary of a document authored by a five-member Uyghur team dispatched by a Uyghur Khagan to acknowledge the northern tribes and communities (the Tibetan Pelliot Manuscript No. 1283), the term Uyghur is recorded as Ho-yo-hor, Ho-yo-hor-če, Ho-yo-'or, and 'U-yi-kor.[10]

Scholars who have carried out research on the Uyghur names found in sources based on contemporary linguistic principles, have put forward differing theories. Among these, the most realistic one suggests that the name derives from the verb *uy-* meaning "to unite" or "to ally," combined with the present tense suffix *-gur,* thus originally meaning "allied" or "those who are united."[11] However, some scholars have argued that the name Uyghur cannot originate from a verb. Alternatively, they put forward the view that the name might originate from *oy*, mean-

5 Kâşgarlı Mahmud, *Dîvânu Lugâti't-Türk*, haz. A. B. Ercilasun-Z. Akkoyunlu, TDK, Ankara 2018, pp.54-55.

6 Mahmûd el-Kâşgarî, *Dîvânü Lugâti't Türk*, Ed. R. Dankoff-K. Kelly, trans. S.T. Yurteser-S. Erdi, Kabalcı Publishers, Istanbul 2007, pp.629-630.

7 Reşîdü'd-dîn Fazlullah, *Cami'ü't-Tevârih*, trans. A. Gölpınarlı, Istanbul, (date unknown), pp.40-41.

8 A. Zeki Velidi Togan, *Oğuz Destanı Reşideddin Oğuznâmesi Tercüme ve Tahlili*, Istanbul 1972, p.20.

9 Ebülgazi Bahadır Han, *Şecere-i Türk*, trans., A. Acaloğlu, Selenge Yayınevi, Istanbul 2020, p.25. The same information exists in the *Şecere-i Terākime*: Ebulgazi Bahadır Han, *Şecere-i Terākime (Türkmenlerin Soy kütüğü)*, Ed., Z. Kargı Ölmez, Ankara 1996, p.237.

10 S.Tezcan, "1283 numaralı Tibetçe Pelliot El Yazmasında Geçen Türkçe Adlar Üzerine", *Bilimsel Bildiriler 1972*, TDK, Ankara 1975, p.303.

11 J. Hamilton, "Toḳuz-Oġuz ve On-Uyġur", trans. Y. Koç-İ. Birkan, *Türk Dilleri Araştırmaları*, 7 (1997), pp.218-219.



ing "pit" or "forest."[12] Most recently, Serkan Şen, taking into account the verb *uy,* which has long been understood to contain a "y" and appears in derivatives such as *uy-tur-*, *uy-ul-*, and *uy-uş-* in the *Dîvânu Lugâti't-Türk*, where it means "to suppress, to press, to crush"—has argued that the name Uyghur carries the meaning "(one who) suppresses (his enemies)."[13]

The Uyghurs until the period of the Uyghur Khaganate

The Uyghurs were first identified by their name among the Turkic groups known as the "High Charioteers" (Chinese: "Gaoche") around the 5th century. During the Göktürk period, they appeared within the Töles tribes, and in Chinese literature, they were referred to not only by the name "Yuanhe" but also as "Wuhu" and "Wuhe," ultimately being called "Weihe" by the late 6th century.

When the Göktürks formed their Khaganate in the mid-6th century, they brought the Töles tribes, including the Uyghurs, under their dominion. Subsequently, living as subjects within the Khaganate, the Uyghurs revolted during times of internal turmoil in the Khaganate, similar to other subjugated tribes throughout Turkic history. Chuluo Khagan quickly reorganized and, in 605, launched an assault on the Töles tribes, seizing their treasures. The Khagan commanded the execution of numerous tribal leaders and commanders. In retaliation, the Uyghurs forged an alliance with the Pugu, Tongra, Bayırku, and Fuluo tribes, leading to another uprising, with their leader given the title "Erkin. " Those who split from the main group were collectively referred to as "Uyghur. " Inspired by the Uyghurs' insurrection under the leadership of the Yaglakar lineage, the Töles tribes began to rebel one by one as well. The Uyghurs settled near the northern border of the Sir Tarduş, alongside the Selenge River.[14]

In historical accounts, the initial leader of the Uyghur tribal alliance is identified as an individual named Tejian, who carried the title Erkin. Following him, his son Pusa succeeded him in leading the Uyghurs. While Pusa was inherently strict, he exhibited wisdom and effectively addressed tribal challenges. During Pusa's reign, the Uyghurs incrementally became more powerful and initiated their expansion over time.[15] In the

12 Tezcan, *op.cit*., p.303.

13 Serkan Şen, *Eski Uyghur Türkçesi Dersleri*, Kesit Publishers, Istanbul 2015, p.17.

14 *Jiu Tang Shu*, p.5195; *Xin Tang Shu*, p.6111.

15 *Jiu Tang Shu*, p.5195; *Xin Tang Shu*, pp.6111-6112.

year 627, the Uyghur forces led by Pusa launched an incursion into territories adjacent to the northern frontiers of the Sir Tardush and the Göktürks. Pusa succeeded in seizing control over the tribes and populace of the Göktürks. Following this conflict, the Uyghurs emerged as a formidable power. Nevertheless, over time, the Uyghur tribes came to serve under the Sir Tardush. Pusa was bestowed with the title "Huo İlteber." Consequently, the leader of the Uyghurs adopted the designation İlteber, which ranked above Erkin. Pusa set up his base of operations along the banks of the Tula River. During this period, a sovereign Sir Tardush Khaganate operated within the Göktürk domain, with its ruler bearing the title "Khagan. " After the conquest or subjugation of the Göktürk Il Khagan and high-ranking Göktürk officials to China, only Pusa's Uyghurs and the Sir Tardush remained the dominant forces in the northern steppes of China.[16]

During this time, the power of the Uyghurs was steadily on the rise, primarily due to the backing of China. Naturally, China was not keen on having another steppe khaganate positioned so close to its frontiers. For them, the fragmented distribution of the tribes was the most secure arrangement. Following Pusa's death, leadership of the Uyghurs transitioned to Grand İlteber Tumidu. The Uyghurs achieved a significant victory over Sir Tarduş Kaghan Duomi, leading to the unification of his tribes under their banner and the acquisition of his territory. In 646, the Uyghurs migrated southward, traversed the Alaşan Mountains, and arrived at the shores of the Yellow River. They dispatched emissaries and rendered tribute to the Chinese court, which hosted a banquet in their celebration.[17]

The Uyghurs, who had previously revolted against the Göktürk Khaganate, now sought complete integration with China. Shortly thereafter, Emperor Taizong of China visited Lingwu and consented to the Uyghurs' wish to align themselves with his rule. Subsequently, the Uyghur tribes migrated south and established themselves along China's northern frontier. All eleven Töles clans approached China with a petition to implement a Chinese administrative framework within the Turkic steppes. In reaction, Emperor Taizong convened the Turkic leaders and military heads, bestowing upon them titles aligned with the Chinese governance structure. He formed six prefectures (fu) and seven districts (zhou), assigning military governors to oversee the prefectures and civil governors to manage the districts. The Uyghur tribe was designated as the "Hanhai" Military Governorship, with the

[16] *Jiu Tang Shu*, p.5196; *Xin Tang Shu*, p.6112.

[17] *Jiu Tang Shu*, p.5196; *Xin Tang Shu*, p.6112.



Uyghur İlteber Tumidu appointed as both the "Grand General of Huaihua" and the "Military Governor of Hanhai."[18] This administrative structure and the titles bequeathed were of a solely nominal nature.

Tumidu soon covertly assumed the title of "Kaghan" and established new ranks and roles. In 648, he was killed by his nephew Wuhe. This act was likely a consequence of Tumidu's self-appointment as Kaghan and his efforts to centralize authority, which alarmed those in his vicinity. This marked a significant and perilous shift. For the Chinese, Tumidu's clandestine claim to the Kaghan title and the subsequent assassination occurring without their awareness posed serious risks. Wuhe was eventually captured and killed by the Chinese forces. In memory of Tumidu, the Chinese court conferred upon him the posthumous title of "Great General of the Left Guard," provided his family with gifts of property and clothing, and conducted sacrifices in his honor. Tumidu's son Porun was designated by China as the "Great General of the Front Left Guard," thus inheriting his father's title. Furthermore, Porun was appointed "Great General Commander of the Left" and "Great İlteber," with the responsibility of managing military operations for the Uyghur tribes, taking on the role of Hanhai Military Governor. Meanwhile, the Uyghurs were reluctant to submit to the Göktürks to the west.[19]

Consequently, China succeeded in establishing control over the eastern territory of the Göktürk Khaganate. Porun received substantial backing. During this time, the Uyghurs emerged as the primary challenge to the cohesion of the Turkic tribes in the steppes.

In 651, Helu, the Western Göktürk Khagan, launched an assault and seized Beşbalık. To counter this, an army dispatched by the Chinese Emperor included 50,000 Uyghur cavalry under Porun's command. This united force dealt a significant blow to Khagan Helu and regained Beşbalık. In 656, Helu Khagan once more invaded areas along the Chinese border, executing raids for plunder. The Chinese Emperor retaliated by sending an allied army with the Uyghurs, who decisively overcame Helu Khagan at Mount Çogay (Yinshan). The Uyghurs triumphed over Helu again at Jinya Mountain. The Chinese regained territories occupied by the Göktürk Khagan, broadening their influence westward up to Yeluochuan. Helu Khagan escaped to the Shiguo (Tashkent) State. Porun pursued the Göktürks with

[18] *Jiu Tang Shu*, p.5196; *Xin Tang Shu*, p.6112-6113.

[19] *Jiu Tang Shu*, p.5197; *Xin Tang Shu*, p.6113.

Chinese support, following them to the city of Suduo, located northwest of Tashkent. There, the ruler Yinie Tarkan apprehended Helu Khagan and sent him to the Chinese capital, Luoyang. Meanwhile, the Uyghurs also launched campaigns toward the east on China's behalf. In 655, a Uyghur contingent, following the Chinese forces, attacked Korea (known as Gaoli or Koguryo).[20]

Porun is believed to have passed away between 661 and 663. Subsequently, his son Bisu[21] ascended as the leader of the Uyghurs. Following this transition, the Uyghurs, in alliance with the Pugu and Tongra tribes, initiated raids and assaults on the Chinese border regions. The Chinese established control over the Uyghurs through the "Yanran" military prefecture, which was also referred to as the "Haihai" military prefecture. From that point, the Gobi Desert became a defined border, and all tribes and groups residing in the northern steppes of China were nominally under this administrative jurisdiction.[22] China skillfully leveraged its established communication network to provoke disputes among the tribes of the Turkic steppes. Tribal leaders, who received titles and privileges from China, progressively moved away from the notion of autonomy.

Upon Bisu's death around 680-681, his son Dujiezhi took over. In 684, Fudifu assumed leadership, succeeded by Chengzong from 713 to 726, and thereafter by Fudinan, who led the Uyghurs in succession. They governed the steppe tribes under the designation of "military governor" on behalf of China, organizing them into "Left Shad" and "Right Shad" for administration. In 682, when the Göktürks regained their independence under İlteriş Kaghan's leadership, the tribes gradually shook off Chinese control and started realigning with the Göktürks. During the reign of Kaghan Kapgan, from 694 to 716, the Göktürks grew in strength and regained full dominance over the territories previously held by Töles. Consequently, a significant portion of the Uyghurs, along with the Qibi, Sijie, and Hun tribes, traversed the desert and established themselves in the area between Ganzhou and Liangzhou, corresponding to modern-day Gansu province.

The Chinese persistently recruited the formidable horsemen of the Uyghurs to support the Chishui ("Red River") Army stationed in Wuwei, Gansu. Concurrently, the Uyghurs played a role in the demise of Kaghan Kapgan in 716. Consequently, another Uyghur leader, İlteber, alongside tribes like the Tongra and Xi, came to the

[20] *Jiu Tang Shu*, s.5197; *Xin Tang Shu*, s.6113.

[21] In the *Xin Tang Shu*, he is referred to as "his sister Bisudu," which is an error.

[22] *Jiu Tang Shu*, s.5197-5198; *Xin Tang Shu,* s.6114.



Chinese court. The emperor instructed these tribes to settle north of the Taiwu Army.[23] Following Fudifu's death, Chengzong became the Uyghur leader in 713 (died 726-727). During his leadership, the Uyghurs gradually became more robust. They started to resist the Chinese forces and even executed the military governor of Liangzhou. Moreover, they severed the ties between the cities of Eastern Turkestan, which were centered in Kucha and under Chinese Anxi governance, and China itself.

The Uyghur İlteber Chengzong sought refuge with the Göktürks shortly thereafter and passed away in their territory.[24] As the Second Göktürk era commenced, the administrative framework that China had imposed on the Turkic steppes completely disintegrated. The Uyghurs, who were the most apprehensive about the Göktürk dominance, were loyal supporters of China and served as the governors of the puppet administration set up by the Chinese in the steppes. Consequently, many Uyghurs migrated to Gansu. Those Uyghurs who had been involved in the demise of the Göktürk Khagan returned to seek sanctuary in the Chinese court. Their defection from China was probably linked to the decline in Göktürk influence in the steppes and the rise in profits from trade routes.

The Rise of the Uyghur Khaganate

Following the passing of Bilge Khagan, the Göktürks struggled to regain stability, and the dynamics of the steppe re-emerged. As the centralized power diminished, various tribes began to disengage from the alliance, signaling the downfall of the Khaganate. This scenario greatly benefited three tribes, the Basmils, the Karluks, and the Uyghurs. During this time, the Uyghur leader referred to in Chinese documents as "Guli Peiluo" had an unknown Turkish equivalent. As the Göktürk Khaganate teetered on the edge of collapse, in 742, the Uyghurs and Karluks proclaimed themselves the Left and Right Yabghus, respectively. Consequently, Guli Peiluo, who bore the title of İlteber, was raised to the status of Yabghu and adopted the name Yabgu Jielitufa (with Jielitufa likely being related to İlteber). With the Basmyls' support, they attacked the Göktürk Khagan Özmiş (known in Chinese as Wusumishi), forcing him to retreat. The Uyghur leader, now holding the title of Yabghu, superior to İlteber, was recognized by the Chinese emperor as Lord Fengyi,

[23] The village of Mayi is located in Shanxi today, and is approximately 30 km northeast of Shuozhou.

[24] *Jiu Tang Shu*, s.5197; *Xin Tang Shu*, s.6114.

meaning "one who follows virtue."[25] Above Yabgu stood the title of Kaghan. Thus, the Uyghurs ruled the east as the Left Yabghu, while the Karluks governed the west as the Right Yabghu. Traditionally, among the Turks, the eastern faction held greater prestige, indicating that the Uyghurs had a higher standing compared to the Karluks. Conversely, the Basmyls occupied an even loftier position, effectively holding the rank of Kaghan. The Uyghurs, inheriting the legacy of the Göktürks, managed to establish an independent state that rivaled the power of the Göktürk Khaganate. It would not be long before they declared a Khaganate of their own.

The Tribes and Family Structure

The Uyghurs, who established themselves in the territory of the Göktürks, shifted their main camp to a location between Mount Ötüken and the Orkhon River. The region was made up of the Nine Oghuz, known in Chinese references as Jiu Xing, translating to "Nine Families. " The tribes or clans that constituted the Nine Oghuz included Yaglakar (Yaoluoge), Huduoge, Duoluowu, Mogexiqi, Awudi, Gesa, Huwasu, Yaowuge, and Xiyewu.

The Yaglakar clan served as the ruling dynasty of the Uyghur Khaganate. The tribes associated with the Nine Oghuz alliance led by the Uyghurs encompassed several groups (with some tribes joining or leaving periodically): Pugu (Buqut), Hun (Ḳun), Bayırku, Tongra, Sijie (Sïγir/Sïqir), Qibi, and Adie (Ediz). Eventually, the Uyghurs triumphed over the Basmils and Karluks, subjugating them as well. Consequently, the total number of tribes grew from nine to eleven with the inclusion of the Basmils and Karluks, establishing eleven military districts (dudu; "tutuq"). This was also known as the "Eleven Tribes. " During warfare, the Uyghurs consistently positioned these two tribes at the front lines.[26]

It is important to recognize that the confederation referred to as the "Nine Oghuz and Ten Uyghurs" included two separate entities. The "Nine Oghuz" consisted of the Uyghur, Pugu, Hun, Bayırku, Tongra, Sijie, Qibi, and Ediz tribes, whereas the "Ten Uyghurs" comprised of the Yaglakar, Huduoge, Duoluowu, Mogexiqi, Awudi, Gesa, Huwasu, Yaowuge, and Xiyewu clans or families. These clans or families held a crucial administrative position within the Uyghur Khaganate, with the Yaglakar clan being the founding lineage. It is vital to differentiate that a tribe ("boy") signifies a social organization that ranks above a family, and

[25] *Xin Tang Shu,* s.6114.

[26] *Jiu Tang Shu*, s.5198; *Xin Tang Shu*, p.6114.



despite being spread across various regions, these tribes came together under the governance established in Ötüken, thus forming the state.

Kutluk Bilge Kül Khagan (744-747)

After Yabgu Jielitufa, whose title likely corresponds with "Ilteber," took control, he triumphed over the Basmils in 744, resulting in the death of Basmil Khagan Jiedieyishi. He then proclaimed himself "Kutluk Bilge Kül Khagan" and dispatched an envoy to China to inform them of this transition. Upon receiving the envoy, the Chinese emperor acknowledged the Uyghur Yabgu as "Huairen Khagan" or "the Khagan who oversees benevolence." This event represented the inaugural official interaction between two independent nations via diplomatic means.

In 745, Uyghur Kutluk Bilge Kül Khagan initiated a fresh military endeavour and eliminated the Göktürk Khagan Beimei. Following this success, the Uyghur realm underwent considerable expansion. As a result, the territories of the Uyghur Khaganate extended east to the Shiwei, west to the Altai Mountains, and south to the Gobi Desert. The entirety of the previous Hun domains came under Uyghur rule.[27]

Consequently, the Uyghurs created another traditional nomadic state on the steppe. This entity, often termed a "Khaganate," was fundamentally a seamless continuation of the Göktürk Khaganate. The population, land, governmental structure, culture, and customs remained precisely the same; the only alteration was the ruling dynasty. While the Göktürks were led by the Ashina family, the Uyghurs came under the leadership of the Yaglakar family. The titles granted to the Uyghur Khagan by the Chinese Emperor were primarily Chinese adaptations of pre-existing Turkic titles, along with a few minor honorary Chinese distinctions. This act held symbolic significance. The newly founded state operated with complete autonomy and would, over time, develop into a force capable of rescuing China from collapse on multiple occasions.

Moyan Çor Kaghan: Tengride Bolmuş İl Etmiş Bilge Khagan (747-759)

After the death of Kutluk Bilge Kül Khagan, his son Moyan Chor[28] succeeded him, taking the title of "Gele Khagan." This Khagan was brave and fearless, skillfully commanding the army, and sent envoys to the Chinese court ev-

27 *Jiu Tang Shu*, p.5198; *Xin Tang Shu*, pp.6114-6115.

28 Although it is unanimously accepted that the second part of the Chinese name Moyan Chuo is Çor, there are those who Turkishise the first signs as Moyen, Bayan, Moyun or object to

ery year.[29] The Khagan's title in the Uyghur Inscriptions is as follows: "Tengride Bolmuş İl Etmiş Bilge Khagan" ("Wise Khagan who became ruler by the grace of God and ruled the state").[30]

Moyan Çor was instrumental in the founding of the Uyghur Khaganate. He faced more challenges than his father, the originator of the state. Following the time of Kutluk Bilge Köl, a yabgu under the Göktürks, power was probably taken around the year 735[31] Moyan Çor is believed to have united the Nine Oghuz tribes between 739 and 740, and by adding the Uyghurs, created the coalition called the Ten Uyghurs.[32]

The Tariat inscription (Tariat, East/5), credited to Moyan Çor, indicates that he was born in 713. It is also understood that Moyan Çor, who likely ordered the consruction of the Şine Us inscription, achieved the rank of major (binbashi) post-741.[33]

This is due to the Tariat inscription mentioning: "At twenty-eight years old, in the Year of the Snake (741), I disrupted the Turkish territory and overcame it," (Tariat, East/5), which denotes the period when he was appointed to his position and began military operations against the Göktürk lands. In the Şine Us inscription, Moyan Çor continues his story:

"I continued my journey solo. At Keyre Baş and Üç Birkü, I connected with the Khagan's forces. There, I underwent training. After crossing the Kara Kum, at Köger, on Kömür Mountain, and at the Yar River, I encountered three tribes of the Turks. . . Ozmış Tigin ascended as Khagan. In the Year of the Sheep (743), I led the army. On the sixth day of the second month. . . I captured (Ozmış Khagan). I took his spouse there. Following this, the Turkish population faced destruction. " (Şine Us, North/7-10).

Consequently, the Göktürk Khagan Ozmış (known as Wusumishi in Chinese narratives) was killed, signifying the succession leading to the last Khagan of the khaganate. Ozmış is believed to have died in the year 744. While a portion of the inscription is missing, Chinese historical records clearly state that the year was 744.[34]

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this. For an objection to the transliteration, see. Osman F. Sertkaya, "Bay, Bayan, Bayin ve Sayin Kelimeleri Üzerine", *Türk Dili*, 705 (2010), p.197.

29 *Jiu Tang Shu*, p.5198; *Xin Tang Shu*, pp.6114-6115.

30 Osman Mert, *Ötüken Uyghur Dönemi Yazıtlarından Tes Tariat Şine Us*, Ankara 2009, p.215, 218. Citations from Tes, Tariat and Şine Us are quoted from Mert's work.

31 Hamilton, "Toḳuz-Oġuz ve On-Uyġur", p.215.

32 Saadettin Gömeç, *Uyghur Türkleri Tarihi ve Kültürü*, Ankara 1997, p.21.

33 Gömeç, *Uyghur Türkleri Tarihi*, p.21.

34 *Xin Tang Shu*, p.6055.



From the statements in the inscriptions (Şine Us, North/10-11), it is apparent that the Uyghurs triumphed over the Basmils, one of the other two allied factions, while the Karluks retreated, thereby allowing the Uyghurs to take control. As a result, Baimei, noted in Chinese records as the final Göktürk Khagan, was removed from power. The last Khagan was personally slain by the newly established Uyghur Khagan.[35] In the Chinese sources, specifically in the *Jiu Tang Shu* (Old Book of Tang), the establishment of the new state is described as follows:[36] In the 3rd year of the Tianbao reign period (744), the Uyghur Yabgu Jielitufa launched an attack on the Basmils and proclaimed himself Kutluk Bilge Kül (Guduolu Pijia Que) Khagan.

It is not known what transpired during the two years following the establishment of the new state; neither Chinese nor Uyghur sources provide enlightenment on this matter. It is likely that these two years were spent dealing with internal struggles, efforts to establish good relations with China, and bringing the tribes under control.

As can be understood from the inscriptions (Shine Us, North/11-12), Kutluk Bilge Kül Kaghan had designated Tay Bilge Tutuk as his heir. As seen from the Shine Us and Tariat inscriptions, Moyan Çor had been involved in tribal conflicts, power struggles, and the establishment of the state since 739. Naturally, he may have exaggerated his own role in his inscriptions. Although this event cannot be fully corroborated by other sources, Moyan Çor's refusal to accept the heir appointed by his Kaghan father and his subsequent conflict with him indicate a situation contrary to traditional custom regarding his brother's ascension as Kaghan. This suggests the existence of an unrecorded matter in the sources concerning the survival of the state. Similar incidents have occurred previously in Turkic history. It is difficult to explain Moyan Çor's actions solely by ambition for power. In the power struggle, Moyan Çor defeated Tay Bilge Tutuk and the tribes supporting him, namely the Eight Oğuz and Nine Tatar tribes, thereby seizing power (Tariat, South/3-6; Tariat, West/3-4).

According to the Turkic inscriptions, Moyan Çor became Kaghan in 748. However, Chinese sources provide a date two to three years earlier and do not mention Tay Bilge Tutuk at all. The identification of Tay Bilge Tutuk as the second Uyghur

35 *Xin Tang Shu*, p.6114.

36 *Jiu Tang Shu*, p.5198.

Kaghan was made by Saadettin Gömeç. According to the information in the Chinese sources, specifically in the Xin Tang Shu:

> In 745, Peiluo (i.e., Kutluk Bilge) attacked and killed the Turkic Kaghan Baimei. Dun Chuoluo Tarkan was sent to the Chinese court. The Emperor appointed Peiluo as the Grand General of the Left Outer Guard. His territory extended eastward to the Shiwei, westward to the Altai Mountains, and southward to the Gobi Desert—lands that had formerly belonged entirely to the Huns. After Peiluo's death, his son Moyan Chuo (Moyan Çor) ascended the throne with the title Gele Kaghan. He was swift, fierce, and skilled in commanding the army. Every year, he sent envoys to the Chinese court.[37]

Even after ascending to the position of Kaghan, Moyan Çor continued to face challenges from Tay Bilge Tutuk and had not completely unified all tribes under his control. The Chinese records do not elaborate on Moyan Çor's endeavors; he is noted later mainly for his role in quelling the An Lushan rebellion in China. Nevertheless, three inscriptions commissioned by the Kaghan himself offer significant insights. The Şine Us Inscription (Şine Us, East/1-7) indicates that, even after Moyan Çor came to power independently, he had not attained full authority by the year 749.

Once Moyan Çor established internal unity, he initiated the organization of the state to manage the conquered tribes and territories. The inscriptions provide further details (Şine Us, East/7-10), revealing that Moyan Çor had already enhanced the state structure and established the summer and winter capitals. Following this, the Nine Oğuz sought to incite the Kyrgyz and Çik tribes to launch an assault on the Uyghurs. Moyan Çor engaged in battles against the Basmils and Karluks. Moreover, the Oğuz and Turks residing in China also launched attacks against the Uyghurs on behalf of China. This scenario is thoroughly described in the inscriptions (Şine Us, East/10-12; South/1-10). The profilic historical information regarding Moyan Çor Khagan in Chinese sources stemmed from a rebellion that took place in China. The Chinese authorities requested Moyan Çor's aid. From that moment forward, the activities of the Uyghurs were meticulously chronicled in Chinese writings.

The An Lushan Rebellion in China and the Intervention of the Uyghurs

An Lushan, a formidable general with a Turkish mother and a Sogdian father, swiftly advanced through the hierarchy of the Chinese military. At the close of 755, he sparked an uprising and, in early 756, took control of the eastern capital,

[37] *Xin Tang Shu*, pp.6114-6115.



Luoyang, followed by the western capital, Chang'an, in the summer of 756. The insurgent troops ravaged the entire city. The freshly crowned Chinese Emperor Suzong escaped to Sichuan in the south. Consequently, An Lushan founded the Great Yan Dynasty in that region.[38]

In August 756, Suzong took the Chinese throne in Lingwu. His initial move was to enlist the help of the Uyghurs to quell the ongoing rebellion. The Uyghur Khagan reacted favorably to the Chinese emperor's plea. It is possible that the Khagan aimed to exert influence over China by assisting in suppressing the rebellion, which indeed unfolded in subsequent historical events.

Reports indicate that the Uyghurs dispatched envoys to offer help in curbing the An Lushan uprising. In response, the Chinese Emperor sent a delegation to the Uyghurs to foster solid military ties. The delegation included the Emperor's commander of Turkic descent, Pugu Huai'en. The Uyghur Khagan was very gratified by these developments. When the Chinese envoys arrived at the Khagan's yurt, Moyan Çor Khagan united the head of the delegation with a Uyghur woman to enhance bilateral relations. Moyan Çor Khagan sent his nobles and commanders to the Chinese court seeking a peace agreement through marriage. Emperor Suzong received the Uyghur delegation warmly and treated them with utmost respect. After China was forced to enter into this cooperation and ceased to be a threat, even if temporarily, Moyan Çor Khagan personally led his army southward. Uyghur forces suppressed and defeated Tongra and several other tribes along the Yellow River. Following this, Moyan Çor Khagan met with the Chinese General Guo Ziyi in the Huyan Valley[39] and held a ceremonial military parade demonstrate his grandeur. After having Guo Ziyi salute by bowing to his wolf banner, the Khagan received him in his presence.

In the second month of the year 757 (from February 23 to March 24), the Uyghurs dispatched fifteen nobles, among them the Grand General Duolan, to the Chinese imperial court. The Khagan's son, Yabgu, made a personal visit to the Chinese court with a contingent of 4,000 to 5,000 cavalry, joined by generals like Dide, in response to the emperor's summons. This military support was intended to help quell the uprising in China. Emperor Suzong hosted a feast to welcome the visiting Uyghur delegation.[40]

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38 Kürşat Yıldırım, *Çin Tarihi*, Ötüken Publishers, Istanbul 2021, pp.152-153.

39 It is the largest tributary of the Yellow River in the city of Bugutu Qota in Inner Mongolia.

40 *Jiu Tang Shu*, s.5198; *Xin Tang Shu*, s.6115.



On October 30, 757, a group of thirteen, including the distinguished Tarkan of the Uyghurs, arrived alongside the generals and soldiers of Shuofang, as well as Guo Ziyi. The mission was underway. Pugu Huai'en, the Left Wing Commander of Shuofang, dispatched Uyghur cavalry for support, resulting in the complete annihilation of the rebel forces. Following this, they tracked down the remaining insurgents. As a consequence, the armies successfully reclaimed the western Chinese capital of Chang'an from the rebels.

Pugu Huai'en then moved towards the eastern capital of Luoyang, leading an army primarily made up of Uyghurs, supplemented by a few foreigners from southern China and some Arabs. The Uyghur Yabgu had sent his troops to the eastern periphery and foothills of Mount Nanshan. Engagements occurred in the valleys, where the rebels were completely eradicated. The Uyghurs strategically positioned themselves behind the insurgents, resulting in a decisive defeat for the rebel forces. The insurgent army was compelled to retreat to a narrow pass in the north, but the Uyghurs swiftly eliminated those who attempted to escape.

The rebels in Luoyang retreated north across the Yellow River. The Uyghur Yabgu entered Luoyang together with Chinese troops. The Uyghurs breached the treasury and claimed its riches. For three days, they ransacked the cities, public squares, and villages. The Chinese could only stop the looting by offering gifts to the Uyghur leaders and elders. Nonetheless, the Yabgu was exceedingly pleased with the circumstances.[41]

In Chinese accounts, it is portrayed as if their own generals commanded the Uyghurs and secured victory, with no role attributed to the Uyghur Yabgu or his commanders. The Chinese likely adopted this approach to claim a stake in the victory and to minimalise their earlier defeats. Moreover, their emphasis on the Uyghur plundering of the city may have been a rhetorical attempt to underestimate the great presence and influence of the Uyghurs. Nevertheless, history seeks the truth, and the praise bestowed upon the Uyghur Yabgu by the Chinese Emperor, in essence, speaks volumes. The Uyghur suppression of the rebellion, followed by the Emperor's act of sending a princess to the Uyghur Khagan, is also documented in the Uyghur inscriptions (Shine Us, West/2–5).

41 *Jiu Tang Shu*, s.5199; *Xin Tang Shu*, ss.6115-6116.



The Uyghur Yabghu and the Chinese Emperor

Upon his return to the Western Capital Chang'an on December 14, 757, the Chinese Emperor Suzong welcomed the Uyghur Yabgu, who had come from Luoyang. The Emperor hosted a banquet for the Yabgu at the palace and took charge of all the preparations himself. The Uyghur beys and commanders assembled on the steps of the palace. The Emperor bestowed upon them gifts such as beautifully embroidered silks, vibrantly woven textiles, and items crafted from gold and silver.[42] The Emperor, having commended the Yabgu, bestowed upon him ceremonial titles and established a yearly tribute. Nevertheless, the taxes typically owed to the Uyghurs and the exceptional trade privileges awarded were considerably more significant. In terms of inter-state protocol, it is clear that the Uyghur Yabgu was viewed as being on par with the Chinese Emperor. After all, there was no alternative for the Emperorwho had just narrowly avoided a substantial perilthan to honor the commander who had rescued him.

The Marriage Alliance with China and the Uyghurs Coming to the Rescue Again

On July 7, 758, the Emperor of China welcomed the Uyghur delegates who arrived for the union between the Uyghur Khagan and the Chinese Princess, hosting a feast for them at the imperial palace. Then, on August 25, the Emperor granted the title of Princess Ningguo to his youngest daughter and dispatched her to the Uyghur Khagan.[43] The Chinese presented the bride, the official letter, and various gifts.[44] Through this alliance, the Uyghurs fully intertwined their fate with China, while simultaneously, the Khagan brought shame upon the Chinese envoys.

At the same time, another uprising erupted within China. Once again, the Chinese found themselves in a position where they had to seek assistance from the Uyghurs. Ultimately, in the ninth month of 758 (between September 7 and October 6), the Uyghurs dispatched the Khagan's son, Gu Chor Tegin, along with a troop of 3,000 cavalry, to aid in quelling the rebellion in China.[45]

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42 *Jiu Tang Shu*, p.5199-5200; *Xin Tang Shu*, p.6115-6116.

43 *Jiu Tang Shu*, p.5200; *Xin Tang Shu*, p.6116.

44 *Jiu Tang Shu,* s.5200-5201; *Xin Tang Shu,* s.6116-6117.

45 *Jiu Tang Shu*, p.5201; *Xin Tang Shu*, p.6117.

Bögü Khagan: Tengride Bolmuş İl Etmiş Bilge Khagan (759-779)

Moyan Chor played a pivotal role in forming and advancing the Uyghur Khaganate, elevating his state to considerable power while achieving military and diplomatic dominance over China. The Uyghurs exerted even greater control over China than during the time of the Göktürks. Conversely, it was Moyan Chor who prevented the Tang Dynasty, which was then ruling China, from falling into ruin. In the latter part of his life, this relentless Khagan battled against the Kyrgyz and passed away in May of 759.

In 758, the Uyghur forces dispatched to assist China were commanded by Gu Chor Tegin, who is described in Chinese records as the "Uyghur heir apparent. " Consequently, this Tegin likely assumed the throne in 759. Chinese documents, lacking definitive details, mention that Moyan Chor's younger son Dengli (possibly Tengri?) (mentioned in the Xin Tang Shu as "Jidijian," perhaps İdikän?[46]) became Khagan, and Bögü (noted as "Mouyu" in Chinese sources) took on the title of Khagan. His title is noted in the Karabalgasun Inscription, which can be interpreted in various ways, with an appropriate English translation being: "The Wise Khagan, appointed by Tengri, the Ruler."

Bögü Khagan's spouse was the daughter of Pugu Huai'en, sent by the Chinese Emperor in response to Moyan Chor Khagan's request for a princess to marry his son. This woman subsequently became the new Khagan's wife and received the title of Katun.

In the autumn (between August 27 and September 25), Princess Ningguo returned from the Uyghurs. Between 760 and 761, Uyghur envoys visited the Chinese court multiple times and were greeted warmly.[47] However, it seems that certain demands from the Uyghurs were unmet by the Chinese, leading to a rise in rebellious activity in China, which stirred the Uyghurs.

In 762 when Daizong took over the Chinese throne, the insurgents still held a firm grip. The new ruler sought assistance from Uyghurs while rebels convinced that control by central authority in China no longer existed persuading Uyghurs to send troops for seizing national treasury.[48] This event not only recorded in Chinese annals but also mentioned in the Chinese part of Karabalgasun Inscription

[46] J. R. Hamilton, *Les Ouïghours á L'époque des Cinq Dynasties,* Paris 1955, s.139.

[47] *Jiu Tang Shu,* s.5202; *Xin Tang Shu*, s.6117.

[48] *Jiu Tang Shu*, p.5202; *Xin Tang Shu*, p.6117.



(Karabalgasun, 6-7). After these events, the Kaghan led Uyghur forces moving south.[49] For China, which had emptied its borders and was awaiting the rebels' final strikes inside, a Uyghur attack would have meant annihilation. China had no choice but to come to an agreement with the Uyghurs.

The march of the Uyghur forces towards the capital of China incited significant alarm. In response, the Chinese Emperor dispatched officials to assess the circumstances. In search of a solution, the Emperor summoned Pugu Huai'en, his subordinate and the father-in-law of the Uyghur Kaghan, to journey from Fenzhou to Taiyuan for a meeting. Concurrently, an official letter was dispatched with an envoy, asking the Uyghurs for assistance in quelling the insurrections. Upon Pugu Huai'en's arrival and subsequent meeting with the Uyghurs, several discussions were initiated.[50] However, the actual terms of the negotiations is a black hole, as no information exists regarding the agreement. What is certain is that the Uyghurs would gain more from the agreement to be made than what they could achieve by invading China.

The Campaign of the Uyghurs

It seems that Bögü Khagan, who aimed to invade China, was influenced by his father-in-law Pugu Huai'en. Although details regarding the terms under which the Uyghurs consented to the treaty are not provided in the sources, the significant rise in taxes and trade advantages that later greatly affected the Chinese economy offers clues about the agreement's nature. After the treaty was signed, the Uyghur military commenced preparations for an assault on the insurgents. The Uyghur Khagan formulated a strategy. The Turkic-descended Pugu Huai'en was elevated to the role of Chinese Prime Minister. The Chinese military leaders allied with the Uyghur Bögü Khagan, who had set up his winter base north of the Yellow River at Shanzhou in the east.[51] This was China's final move against the rebels. In the event of failure, not only would the state collapse, but the rebels and the Uyghurs—who would promptly negotiate with them—would gain far more than they desired. The suggestion by the Chinese of campaign directions to the Uyghur Khagan likely stemmed from their belief that the Uyghur Khagan still intended to occupy the Chinese heartland.

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49 *Jiu Tang Shu*, p.5202; *Xin Tang Shu*, p.6117.

50 *Jiu Tang Shu*, p.5202-5203; *Xin Tang Shu*, p.6118.

51 *Jiu Tang Shu*, p.5203; *Xin Tang Shu*, p.6118.

Pugu Huai'en, along with the Right Shad of the Uyghurs, led the charge, allowing the forces to vanquish the insurgents and reclaim the capital, Luoyang. Following the recapture of Luoyang, the Uyghur Khagan pressed further into China, establishing a military encampment where he resided for several months. Throughout this period, control extended over everything within a 50 km radius of the Uyghur camp. The Chinese experienced significant anxiety regarding this development. With the Uyghurs' assistance, the entirety of Hebei was purged of insurgents. This event, where the Uyghurs aided in saving China, is also documented in the Karabalgasun Inscription (Karabalgasun, 6-7).[52] The event of the Uyghurs saving China in this manner is also recounted in the Karabalgasun Inscription (Karabalgasun, 6-7).

The Uyghurs in the Chinese Capital

Previously, after arriving in Luoyang to quell the insurgents and having neutralized the rebellion and associated threats, the plundering conducted by the Uyghurs within the city instilled considerable fear in the Chinese populace. When a Uyghur diplomatic envoy visited the Chinese court to commemorate the occasion, they behaved with great arrogance, belittling and treating Chinese officials and officers with disdain. During this time, the Chinese found themselves in a precarious situation.[53]

The Uyghurs came to China's rescue once more and, as was customary during that era, they pillaged the capital city they had seized. Rather than recognizing the Uyghur saviors, Chinese accounts inflated the narrative of the spoils rightfully earned by the Uyghur victors to diminish their contribution. This mindset from the Chinese has manifested in various historical instances. The Chinese readily depicted the Uyghur invaders, who had come to quell the rebels, as marauding bands. The honors and rewards bestowed by the Chinese court effectively translated to higher taxes and benefits for the Uyghurs. The extent of the "gifts" given to Bögü Khagan for rescuing the Chinese can be inferred from these circumstances.

Bögü Khagan and the Manichaean Religion

It has been acknowledged that Bögü Khagan was influenced by the Manichaean priests he encountered during his military endeavors and travels throughout China.

[52] *Jiu Tang Shu*, p.5203-5204; *Xin Tang Shu*, pp.6118-6119.

[53] *Jiu Tang Shu*, p.5204; *Xin Tang Shu*, p.6119.



Following the liberation of Luoyang, the Khagan remained in China for a period and was likely impacted by the urban civilization, architecture, the ease of settled life, as well as the temples and rituals of established religions. To promote the religion, he dispatched these priests to the lands of the Uyghurs. The occurrence of certain Uyghurs, particularly Bögü Khagan himself, interacting with the Manichaean faith is also recounted in the Karabalgasun Inscription (Karabalgasun, 7-10).

The New Uyghur-Chinese Pact

In 764, Pugu Huai'en sparked a rebellion that endured for nearly two years before it was eventually quelled. At first, the Uyghurs backed Pugu Huai'en, but alleigances shifted. The Uyghur aristocrats reached a pact with the Chinese to mount a collaborative attack on the Tibetans.[54]

The Chinese forces, alongside Uyghur infantry and cavalry, confronted the Tibetans at the summit of Chishan ("Red Mountain"), positioned 25 kilometers west of the Lingtai district in Jingzhou. They triumphed over the Tibetan army, which consisted of more than 100,000 troops. They seized significant loot. The conflict, which commenced at dawn, rendered the Tibetans so forzen that they struggled to utilize their bows and arrows.[55]

The Uyghurs adeptly evaluated China's circumstances in response to the Tibetan challenge and leveraged it for their benefit. Subsequently, through the collection of taxes presented as gifts and the acquisition of trade privileges, particularly in equine commerce, they amassed considerable wealth. The Emperor welcomed the Uyghurs to the palace and bestowed upon them a variety of gifts. The Uyghurs presented horses as gifts to the capital. The Emperor similarly hosted a banquet to commemorate their contributions. Encompassing prior and following instances, the Emperor bestowed upon them 100,000 bolts of silk fabrics in a variety of hues. During that period, the Chinese treasury had been completely depleted. Palace officials were not paid their salaries.[56] Given the Uyghurs' dominance over China, the Chinese were compelled to offer substantial payments for the horses and goods they received, continually augmenting the value of the so-called "gifts."

[54] *Jiu Tang Shu*, p.5205-5206; *Xin Tang Shu*, pp.6119-6120.

[55] *Jiu Tang Shu*, p.5206; *Xin Tang Shu*, p.6120.

[56] *Jiu Tang Shu*, pp.5206-5207.

The Uyghurs, who were accommodated by the Chinese in the capital and its vicinity and afforded numerous privileges, behaved as they saw fit, with no outside interference. During the initial month of 771, the Uyghurs departed from the state ceremonial building where they had been guests and engaged in widespread looting throughout the city and its squares, targeting both men and women. In response to attempts by authorities to control their actions, the Uyghurs became agitated and resorted to physically assaulting them. In August of 772, Shao Yue, the governor of Chang'an, was assaulted in a public setting yet successfully evaded the attack without assistance. During the 11th month of 773 (November 19 – December 18), 140 Uyghurs repatriated to their homeland accompanied by more than 1,000 carts laden with goods.[57] During this period, the Uyghurs operated autonomously within central China, while the Chinese authorities found themselves unable to intervene.

The Impressive Achievements of the Uyghurs

During the period from 758 to 760, the Uyghurs attained considerable achievements in support of China. In exchange, they obtained substantial benefits. They consistently dispatched envoys accompanied by substantial herds of horses and, in return, obtained silk through trade. Annually, they presented tens of thousands of horses at the markets, obtaining 40 bolts of silk for each superior-quality horse.

A considerable number of Uyghur envoys and their retinue successively resided at the Chinese state ceremonial edifice. Not only were all of their expenses borne by China, but they were additionally presented with gifts. The silk obtained in exchange for the horses was of excellent quality; however, the horses presented to the Chinese were unfit for use. This circumstance had adverse economic repercussions for the Chinese court. Concurrently, the Chinese Emperor promulgated a specific edict concerning the presents dispatched to the Uyghurs.[58]

Upon Emperor Dezong's accession to the throne in 779, he dispatched a court official to the Uyghurs to convey the promlugation of mourning for the late Emperor. Concurrently, he articulated a wish to reinstate the prior amicable relations. Nonetheless, Bögü Khagan demonstrated a lack of adherence to protocol in his interactions with the envoy. Furthermore, the Sogdians, who were under Uyghur

[57] *Jiu Tang Shu,* s.5207; *Xin Tang Shu,* s.6120.

[58] *Jiu Tang Shu*, p.5207; *Xin Tang Shu*, pp.6120-6121.



rule, were advocating to the Khagan that it would be advantageous and fitting to oppose China. The Sogdians constituted a group significant in the realm of interstate trade during that period. They were prompting the Khagan to undertake an invasion of China. In reaction, the Khagan devised a strategy to attack the grieving Chinese populations located in the southern regions of his territory. Dun Baga Tarkan, the principal commander of the Khagan, cautioned him.[59] However, the Khagan did not heed his advice.

Alp Kutluk Bilge Khagan (779-789)

Bögü Khagan, having fallen under the influence of the Sogdians, progressively alienated himself from the Uyghur statesmen and the populace. In response to the circumstances, Commander-in-Chief Dun Baga Tarkan orchestrated a coup with the backing of statesmen and the populace, and Bögü Khagan was murdered. During this coup, a total of 2,000 individuals perished, including the Sogdians who were deeply embedded within the state and exerted influence over the Khagan's thoughts, as well as the Khagan's close associates and loyal adherents. Dun Baga ascended to the throne and assumed the title of Alp Kutluk Bilge Khagan.[60] Dun Baga Tarkan's name is inscribed as Kutlug Baga Tarkan in the Suci Inscription.[61] Following the ascension of Dun Baga Tarkan to power, Uyghur merchants conducting business openly within China, along with Sogdians under their safeguarding, began to encounter heightened scrutiny from Chinese authorities.

It was evident that the perception of the Uyghurs in China had undergone a transformation. On August 28, 779, Emperor Dezong promulgated an edict prohibiting the Uyghurs residing in the capital from adopting Chinese attire.[62] The Uyghurs could no longer function autonomously, their attire would lead to immediate recognition. Initially, when the Uyghurs migrated to China, they consistently accompanied by the Sogdians. These Sogdians remained in the Chinese capital. Progressively, they attained affluence and amassed a considerable number of assets. They encountered no impediments and possessed substantial advantages. Furthermore, notwithstanding any criminal activities perpetrated by the Chinese, the Uy-

59 *Jiu Tang Shu,* s.5208.

60 *Xin Tang Shu*, p.6121.

61 Orkun, Hüseyin Namık, *Eski Türk Yazıtları*, Vol. I, Ankara 1987, p.156.

62 *Zizhi Tongjian*, Zhonghua Shuju, Beijing 1997, p.7265.

ghurs lacked the authority to hold them responsible. Nevertheless, the antagonistic policies of Bögü Khagan towards China, incited unduly by the Sogdians and Manichaeans, along with the internal disorder resulting from the coup orchestrated by Dun Baga Tarkan, which conveyed an impression of declining Uyghur power, prompted specific alterations within China.

A significant occurrence indicative of the evolving atmosphere is documented in Chinese sources. According to these accounts, a Uyghur caravan consisting of dignitaries such as Tudong, Yimishi, and the prominent and minor Buyruk was purportedly executed by Chinese officials while en route to their homeland along with their goods.[63] Nonetheless, being averse to the potential risk of conflict with the Uyghurs, the Chinese Emperor discharged the individuals accountable and dispatched an emissary to convince the Uyghurs that the events had transpired in a manner distinct from their understanding.

In 781, a Chinese delegation traveled to the Uyghur region to recover the remains. The Khagan dispatched his emissary to the Chinese court, seeking substantial compensation in the presence of the visiting Chinese envoy. Despite the Emperor's considerable displeasure upon the arrival of the Uyghur envoys, he suppressed his emotions and bestowed upon them gifts of gold and silk.[64] This event illustrates that the Khagan, endeavoring to preserve stability within the Uyghur region, had no intention of initiating hostilities against China; rather, he aimed to mitigate the conflict through a significant indemnity. Conversely, China opted to address the issue without further escalation.

The events that transpired in the Uyghur Khaganate from 781 to 787 remain enigmatic; this interval was probably characterized by internal conflicts. In addition to this, it is acknowledged that the Uyghurs engaged in hostilities against the Shatuo during this period. It is additionally recognized that the Khagan, who ascended to power via a coup, faced significant challenges in sustaining his position.

The plundering of the Uyghur caravans and the cutting of ties also resulted in the closure of the Uyghur colony in China.[65] This event illustrates that the Khagan, in his efforts to preserve stability within the Uyghur region, had no intention of initiating hostilities with China; conversely, he aimed to mitigate the conflict by

63 *Xin Tang Shu,* s.6121-6122.

64 *Xin Tang Shu*, p.6122.

65 Ahmet Taşağıl, *Uyghurlar. 840'tan Önce*, Bilge Kültür Sanat, Istanbul 2020, p.109.



offering a significant compensation. Conversely, China opted to address the issue while refraining from further escalation.

The events that transpired in the Uyghur Khaganate from 781 to 787 remain enigmatic; this interval was probably characterized by internal conflicts. Additionally, it is acknowledged that the Uyghurs engaged in conflict with the Shatuo during this period. It is also recognized that the Khagan, who ascended to power via a coup, encountered significant challenges in sustaining his position.

The Threat Posed by Tibet and the New Uyghur-Chinese Alliance

Throughout this period, the Tibetans had attained considerable strength in the western regions, seizing a substantial area of East Turkestan and initiating an eastward progression. Simultaneously, China had concluded its internal recovery and was now focused on developing a new policy.[66] China was now compelled to negotiate an accommodation with the Uyghur community. Furthermore, in 787, the Tibetans seized Dunhuang, significantly disrupting China's ties with the West. In the year 788, Tibetan military forces advanced to the northern areas surrounding the western capital, Chang'an.[67]

In the 9th month of the year 787 (September 16 – October 15), Mochuo (Kapgan?) Tarkan, the Commander-in-Chief dispatched by the Uyghur Khagan, along with others, arrived at the Chinese court and suggested a peace agreement via matrimony. Ultimately, Princess Xian'an was married to the Uyghur Khagan.[68]

The Glorious, Wise Khagan Created by Tengri (Heaven) (Panguan Tegin and/or Duoluosi Khagan)

In December of 789, Khagan Dun Baga Tarkan passed away. His son Duoluosi succeeded him in his role. The Uyghurs identified him as "Panguan Tegin." Upon ascending to the position of Khagan, this Tegin adopted the designation "Tengride Bolmish Külüg Bilge Khagan" (Kara Balgasun, 11). His rule was brief. It is recognized that certain trade relationships persisted throughout his era. One historical account indicates that between July 17 and August 14, 790, the Uyghur envoy

66 *Zizhi Tongjian*, p.7502.

67 *Zizhi Tongjian*, p.7513.

68 *Jiu Tang Shu*, p.5208; *Xin Tang Shu*, pp.6122-6123.

Yizhijia Tarkan repatriated to his homeland, and in consideration for the horses he presented, the Emperor awarded him 34,000 bolts of silk.[69]

Kutluk Bilge Kaghan (Achuo Kaghan) (790-795)

In the 4th month of the year 790 (between April 19 and May 18), the Uyghur Khagan was murdered by his own brother.[70] During that period, the Great General of the Uyghurs, İl Ögesi (Jieganjiasi), had embarked on a military expedition against the Tibetans in the western regions and had not yet concluded his campaign. The Deputy Chief Minister (Buyruk Başı) convened the populace of the nation, eliminated the usurper who had claimed the throne, and proclaimed the youngest son of Tengride Bolmuş Külüg Bilge Khagan as Achuo Khagan. Following a short interval of internal strife, the Uyghur state progressively experienced a restoration of peace. Another notable occurrence of that year was the occupation of the Chinese-administered Bešbalık (Beshbalik) Governorate by Tibetan forces.[71] This implied that the routes extending westward from China had predominantly come under Tibetan control.

Around the year 756, the pathway connecting Kuça and Beşbalıki—namely, the northern region of East Turkestan, with China was severed. In 781, emissaries dispatched by Chinese governors in Turkestan successfully traversed Uyghur territory to arrive in Chang'an. While the Chinese were permitted to traverse Uyghur territories, the Uyghurs levied exorbitant demands and profited from these transits. Conversely, the Tibetans had established a strong proximity to Beşbalık, and through the confiscation of livestock and commodities, they had significantly enhanced their strength.[72] Consequently, China once more fell under the sphere of influence of the Uyghurs. Confronted with the challenge presented by the Tibetans from the west, China was compelled to depend on the Uyghurs. Furthermore, communication with the western regions could only be sustained via Uyghur territory.

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69 *Jiu Tang Shu*, .5208.

70 According to the entry in *Xin Tang Shu*, (p.6115), This Qaghan was poisoned by Ye Princess, who was a little Katun, Katun was the granddaughter of Pugu Huai'en. Pugu Huai'en's son was Uyghur Yabgu, whose daughter was called Ye Princess. So the younger brother of the Kagan ascended the throne.

71 *Jiu Tang Shu*, p.5209; *Xin Tang Shu*, p.6125.

72 *Jiu Tang Shu*, p.5209.



The Uyghur-Tibetan War in Bešbalık

Before the Uyghur-Tibetan war, certain developments transpired. The Karluk tribe and the "White-Clad" Turks[73] originally enjoyed good relations with the Uyghurs and were also disturbed by the raids and destruction caused by the Tibetans. Nevertheless, when the Tibetans offered them substantial bribes, they aligned themselves with their cause. Consequently, the Tibetans assembled the Karluks and the "White-Clad" Turks and conducted a raid on Beşbalık throughout the winter. Notwithstanding the mobilization of his forces by the Uyghur Commander İl Ögesi and his subsequent assistance to Beşbalık, he experienced a series of defeats. The Tibetans promptly launched an offensive against Beşbalık. Having experienced prior oppression under the Uyghurs, the inhabitants of Beşbalık capitulated to the Tibetans, and the Shatuo tribes additionally yielded. Shortly thereafter, İl Ögesi returned and in the autumn of 790, assembled a formidable force of approximately 50,000 Uyghurs to initiate an attack, yet experienced another defeat. The Uyghurs had been defeated in the region; the Karluk wagons captured the Futu Valley from the Uyghurs. The Uyghurs experienced considerable apprehension, leading the northwestern tribes to relocate southward to the vicinity of the Khagan's tent, seeking refuge with their livestock.[74]

In 791, the Uyghurs engaged in conflict with the Tibetans and Karluks in Beşbalık, ultimately securing a victory. Before this event, the Tibetans had entered Lingzhou; however, they were subsequently defeated by the Uyghurs. During the twelfth month of 792 (December 30, 791 – January 27, 792), the Uyghurs offered the apprehended Tibetan Commander to the Chinese court as a token of goodwill.[75]

A Dynastic Change in the Khaganate: Tengride Ülüg Bulmuş Alp Kutluk Ulug Bilge Kaghan (795–805)

Kutluk Bilge Kaghan passed away in 795 at the young age of approximately 21-22. The Kaghan was likely subject to the influence of numerous state officials and may have also been governed by the Buyruk Başı who succeeded him. In the Chinese portion of the Karabalgasun Inscription, the newly appointed Kaghan is designated as Tengride Ülüg Bulmuş Alp Kutluk Ulug Bilge Kaghan, and comprehensive details regarding his identity are furnished (Karabalgasun, 12-13).

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73 *In Xin Tang Shu, he is referred to as "White-Eyed".*

74 *Jiu Tang Shu*, pp.5209-5210; *Xin Tang Shu*, p.6125.

75 *Jiu Tang Shu*, p.5210; *Xin Tang Shu*, p.6125.

As per Chinese sources, the late Kutluk Bilge Kaghan did not have any sons, whereupon the populace of the nation selected Buyruk Başı Kutluk as the new Kaghan. Kutluk originated from the Ediz clan of the Töles tribe, which is denoted as Xiedie in Chinese historical sources. He was orphaned during his childhood and subsequently adopted by the commander-in-chief. During the rule of Dun Baga Tarkan Kaghan, he led the army on numerous occasions and was esteemed by the nobility and military leaders. Upon assuming power, given that the Yaglakar family had established the khaganate, he refrained from associating with his own family or adopting his family's name. Nevertheless, Dun Baga Tarkan Kaghan had apprehended all his sons and grandsons and dispatched them to the Chinese court.[76]

No comprehensive records exist regarding the activities of Tengride Ülüg Bulmuş Alp Kutluk Ulug Bilge Kaghan, who ascended to power in 795, until the year 805. It is documented that in 806, a diplomatic delegation was dispatched to China. In addition to this, the Kaghan fostered amicable diplomatic relations with China, engaged in conflicts with the Tibetans, and was preoccupied with subduing internal tribal groups such as the Kyrgyz and Karluks. Statements regarding this matter are found in the Chinese portion of the Karabalgasun Inscription (Karabalgasun, 13-15).

Tengriye Alp Külüg Bilge Kaghan (805-808)

Tengride Ülüg Bulmuş Alp Kutluk Ulug Bilge Kaghan passed away in 805. He was succeeded by Tengriye Alp Külüg Bilge Kaghan. Subsequent to 806, the Uyghurs once more presented gifts to the Chinese court, and for the first time, they commenced to include Manichaeans among their delegation. In accordance with Manichaean tenets, the evening meal was consumed, water was imbibed, vegetables were ingested, and kumis (fermented mare's milk) was proscribed. The Kaghan consistently engaged them in matters of state. The Manichaeans arrived in the Chinese capital annually, appearing at the Western Market in Chang'an, where merchants frequently engaged in clandestine and forbidden commerce with them. Shortly thereafter, Kaghan passed away.[77] After the new Kaghan came to power, he defeated the Tibetans who were besieging Kucha (Karabalgasun, 16).

[76] *Xin Tang Shu*, p.6126.

[77] *Xin Tang Shu*, p.6126.



Tengride Kut Bulmuş Alp Bilge Kaghan (808-821)

Following the death of the Kaghan in 808, Tengride Kut Bulmuş Alp Bilge Kaghan[78] came to the throne.[79] Upon Kaghan's ascension to the throne, the Uyghurs seized the city of Liangzhou in Gansu in 808. In reaction to this situation, the Tibetans sought to transfer the Shatuo Turks, whom they had positioned at the forefront, out of this area. Nevertheless, the Shatuo engaged in conflict with the Tibetans and subsequently retreated northward, with a portion of the group seeking asylum in China.[80]

In 810, diplomatic missions dispatched by the Uyghurs once more reached the Chinese court. The Kaghan's emissary, Inançu (Yinanzhu), again proposed a marital alliance to achieve peace, however, this request was disregarded. Subsequently, the Kaghan progressed with his forces towards Piti Bulak. In response, the Chinese implemented a heightened state of alert concerning the Uyghurs.[81] During the fifth month of the year 813 (May 4 – June 1), the Uyghurs reiterated their appeal for a peace treaty facilitated by marriage. China did not offer a direct response to this request; however, the Chinese Emperor hosted a banquet at the palace for the envoy Inançu (Yinanzhu) and bestowed upon him gifts of silver artifacts and silk textiles. During that period, China was grappling with a renewed outbreak of domestic rebellions and was financially incapable of sustaining the expenses entailed by a marital alliance. To evade providing an affirmative response to the marriage proposal, the Chinese engaged the Manichaeans. As the Uyghurs held faith in and reverence for the Manichaeans, the Emperor utilized them to communicate to the Uyghurs that the marriage could not proceed. Nevertheless, when the Uyghurs continued to advocate for a diplomatic marriage, Emperor Xianzong of China, who assumed the throne in 820, ultimately conceded to bestow a Chinese princess upon the Uyghurs.[82] The acceptance of the marital alliance by China was predominantly influenced by the uprisings that had emerged within the country. The Uyghurs, aiming to restore their previous prominence in trade, once more engaged the Sogdians and Manicheans as intermediaries to fulfill

78 Karabalgasun is mentioned in 16. There is no "Ay" at the beginning of the title.

79 *Xin Tang Shu*, p.6126.

80 *Zizhi Tongjian*, pp.7651-7652.

81 *Xin Tang Shu*, pp.6126-6127.

82 *Jiu Tang Shu*, pp.5210-5211; *Xin Tang Shu*, p.6129.

their objectives. The impact of the Manicheans at the Chinese court was apparent in their personal reception by the Emperor himself.

Tengride Kut Bulmuş Küçlüg Bilge Kaghan (821-824)

Tengride Kut Bulmuş Alp Bilge Kaghan passed away in 821 and was succeeded by Tengride Kut Bulmuş Küçlüg Bilge Kaghan. During the 6th month of 821 (June 4 – July 2), the recently inaugurated Uyghur Kaghan, accompanied by Inançu (Yinanzhu), Külüg? Tutuq (Military Governor) Sijie, along with Manicheans, the Yabgu Princess, and a delegation comprising 573 individuals, arrived at the Chinese court to accept the princess and were housed in the state ceremony hall. Prior to this instance, a diplomatic delegation of such significant proportions had never been dispatched to China. Princess Taihe was designated to be presented to the Uyghurs as a bride. This princess was the offspring of the preceding Emperor Xianzong.[83] The marriage's realization brought about new developments. The Tibetan attack that the Chinese feared began earlier than expected.

Following the peace treaty Chinese made with the Uyghurs through marriage, the Tibetans attacked and destroyed Qingsai Fortress. When the Chinese retaliated, the Tibetans retreated.[84] One of the initial measures undertaken by Tengride Kut Bulmuş Küçlüg Bilge Kaghan following his accession to the throne was to initiate hostilities against the Tibetans and Karluks. This occurrence is detailed on the Chinese portion of the Karabalgasun Inscription (Karabalgasun, 19-21).

Subsequently, the Tibetans negotiated a peace treaty with the Chinese in 821 and with the Uyghurs in 822, which was then succeeded by an additional peace accord with the Chinese in 823. Following this event, the Tibetans refrained from initiating any subsequent attacks, leading to a period of relative stability in the region.[85] This marked a new period for the Uyghurs. They of course would claim their due rights from China in full, but they no longer held the "Tibetan card." Meanwhile, China would focus on internal rebellions and formulate new policies.

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83 *Jiu Tang Shu*, p.5211; *Xin Tang Shu*, p.6129.

84 *Jiu Tang Shu*, pp.5211-5212.

85 C. I. Beckwith, *Tibet İmparatorluğu Tarihi*, trans. A. F. Doğan, Selenge Publishers, Istanbul 2020, p.172-173.



Map 1. The Tibetans, the Uyghurs, and the Chinese [86]

In 822, the Chinese Emperor provided the Uyghurs with a total of 120,000 bolts of silk as remuneration for the considerable number of horses they supplied. Following the emergence of rebellions in Youzhou and Zhenzhou, the Uyghurs expressed a desire to provide assistance. Nonetheless, the Chinese court denied this appeal, reasoning that the Uyghurs would obtain significant benefits from the campaign. Notwithstanding this, the Uyghurs persisted and arrived at the northern boundary of Fengzhou. After embarking on a lengthy journey and incurring considerable costs, the Emperor decreed that 70,000 bolts of silk fabric be presented to them as a token of appreciation. Upon obtaining these gifts, the Uyghurs repatriated to their homeland.[87]

86 *Türk Devletleri Tarih ve Kültür Atlası*, Türk Kültürüne Hizmet Vakfı Yayınevi, Istanbul 2022, s.71 (Map composed by Kürşat Yıldırım; illustrated by C. Şahin-F. Özcan).

87 *Jiu Tang Shu*, p.5212.

Ay Tengride Kut Bulmuş Alp Bilge Kaghan (824-832)

The Uyghur Khagan passed away in 824. His brother, Hesa Tegin, ascended to the throne. In 829, the Chinese Emperor bequethed the Uyghurs with 230,000 bolts of silk as payment for the horses.[88] The Uyghurs had amicable relations with China, with whom they had established marriage ties. Furthermore, both the parties and the Chinese had established peaceful relations with the Tibetan people. Commercial activity experienced a resurgence, and caravans commenced their bidirectional journeys. Nevertheless, it was evident that there existed internal challenges not represented in the sources. In addition to power struggles exemplified by khagans being overthrown in coups, there were fundamental uprisings among the Kyrgyz, ultimately leading to the disintegration of the state. While the Chinese exhibited a period of reticence concerning the domestic affairs of the Uyghurs that were deemed inconsequential, they would recommence the maintenance of records during the phase of disintegration.

Ay Tengride Kut Bulmuş Alp Külüg Bilge Kaghan (832-839)

In 832, the Khagan was murdered by his cabinet members. Subsequently, the Khagan's nephew, Hu Tegin, was elevated to the throne with the title Ay Tengride Kut Bulmuş Alp Külüg Bilge Khagan. In the sixth month of 835 (June 30 – July 28), Uyghur emissaries presented themselves at the Chinese court, accompanied by seven young women proficient in archery on horseback, a gift from Princess Taihe, as well as two youths from the Shatuo region.[89]

Hesa (Kasar) Tegin Kaghan (839-840)

The Uyghurs were approaching a state of total disintegration, as power struggles and coup attempts persisted unabated. The administration of the state exhibited a complete lack of stability. According to the sources, in approximately 839, the Buyruk Başı (high-ranking commanders) An Yunhe and Tegin Chaicao conspired to depose Khagan Hu Tegin. Upon hearing of this, Hu Tegin Khagan executed both An Yunhe and Tegin Chaicao. Simultaneously, beyond the palace walls, the Uyghur Buyruk Başı Jueluowu, who commanded the military forces, expressed his

[88] *Jiu Tang Shu*, p.5213; *Xin Tang Shu*, p.6130.

[89] *Jiu Tang Shu*, p.5213.



indignation regarding the deaths of An Yunhe and Tegin Chaicao. Consequently, he assaulted and assassinated Khagan Hu Tegin in 839.[90] Following the demise of the Khagan, Hesa (Kasar) Tegin ascended to the position of Khagan. During that year, a famine occurred, succeeded by an epidemic disease outbreak. Significant snowfall was also observed, resulting in the mortality of the majority of sheep and horses.[91] The most significant adversity faced by the Uyghurs during this period was the unequal conditions provided by nature, within such a pastoral economic framework, the depletion of herds signified the cessation of all economic activity.

The Demise of the Khaganate

The Uyghur General Külüg Baga initially evaded the Khagan and sought asylum among the Kyrgyz. Recognizing the critical condition of the state, this general aligned with the Kyrgyz and, leading 100,000 cavalrymen, launched an assault on the Uyghur capital. Khagan Hesa met his demise, Buyruk Başı Jueluowu's head was severed, and the Khagan's tent, along with nearly all assets in the Uyghur center, was incinerated and ruined. The Uyghurs dispersed and sought refuge in diverse territories.[92] The Khaganate had been annihilated.

The Uyghur Buyruk Bashi Sazhi, accompanied by his nephew Pang Tegin, his son Lubin'efen, and approximately five elder brothers, migrated westward with 15 tribes to the Karluks; one contingent sought refuge with the Tibetans, while another proceeded to Kucha. Concurrently, thirteen tribes or uruks in proximity to the Khagan's encampment elected Wujie Tegin as their Khan. The camp was established to the south, on Mount Cuozi, situated at the northern boundary of the Middle Urad Banner in Inner Mongolia.[93]

A segment of the Uyghurs elevated a Khagan known as Üge (Wujie) Khagan (841–846). The central region of the state, namely Ötüken, was relinquished, resulting in the dispersion of the populace. Nonetheless, the Uyghurs persisted in their resistance.

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[90] *Xin Tang Shu*, According to the record on p. 6130, in 839, Jueluowu, the head of the Uyghur Order, joined forces with Shatuo soldiers and attacked the Khan, who committed suicide.

[91] *Jiu Tang Shu*, p.5213; *Xin Tang Shu*, p.6130.

[92] *Jiu Tang Shu,* s.5213; *Xin Tang Shu,* s.6130.

[93] *Jiu Tang Shu*, p.5213; *Xin Tang Shu*, pp.6130-6131. *In the Jiu Tang Shu, it is said, "He became subject to China".*

The Uyghurs traversed the Gobi Desert southward and arrived at the Tiande frontier. The Khagan addressed a letter to the Chinese Emperor, conveying his aspiration to dwell in the city of Tiande[94] alongside Princess Tianhe. In the interim, the internal disputes within the Uyghur community exhibited no indication of resolution. The Buyruk Başı disapproved of Üge Khagan's policies and emphasized the necessity of attacking the Chinese borders. Having suppressed the opposition and solidified his authority, the tribes of Üge Khagan consisted of approximately 100,000 individuals. He established the encampment of his khaganate on Lümen Mountain, situated to the north of the city of Datong. During the autumn of 842, the Uyghurs routinely conducted incursions into the Xia region located to the east and north, as well as the territories of Tiande, Zhenwu, and Yunshuo. They harmed, apprehended, or eliminated the indigenous populations. Recognizing that the Uyghur challenge persisted, the Chinese Emperor mobilized all his military forces to confront them.[95]

During the winter of 842 and the spring of 843, Uyghur aristocrats and a substantial percentage of the population sought asylum in China. The Chinese Emperor acknowledged their presence. Certain nobles sought refuge in the south with the Tibetans, while others sought asylum in the northeast with the proto-Mongol Shiwei. Üge Khagan experienced growing isolation as nobles, tegins, and state officials gradually yielded to China. Üge Khagan solidified his relationships through matrimony with the sister of the proto-Mongol Shiwei chieftain.[96]

E'nian Tegin Kaghan (846-848) and the End of Steppe Life for the Uyghurs

Despite Üge Khagan's diminished authority, he retained the title of Khagan, presenting an issue that initially required resolution by the Chinese and subsequently by the Uyghurs, who expressed disapproval of the Khagan's ineffective policies. Consequently, the Uyghur Buyruk Bashi Yiyin Chor exerted pressure on the Uyghurs and orchestrated the assassination of Üge Khagan in the Altai Mountains, subsequently appointing his brother, E'nian Tegin (849–848), as Khagan. The newly appointed Khagan rapidly activated the dynamics of the steppe,

[94] It was in the north-east of the Urad Sanjak in present-day Inner Mongolia.

[95] *Jiu Tang Shu*, p.5214: *Xin Tang Shu*, p.6131.

[96] *Jiu Tang Shu*, p.5215: *Xin Tang Shu*, p.6132.



assembling more than 5,000 individuals under his leadership. The provisions, resources, and the entire flock of sheep required by the new Khagan and his forces were supplied by the proto-Mongol Kumoxi. As long as a Khagan existed for China to confront, the peril persisted. By the spring of 848, the remaining Khagan, along with his family, nobility, officials, and populace, totaled fewer than 500 individuals. In the end, they were subordinated to the proto-Mongol Shiwei. The Kyrgyz Buyruk Bashi Abo was in charge of the steppe armies, which comprised approximately 70,000 individuals. They advanced towards the northern boundary of Tiande from the southwest, apprehended E'nian Khagan along with his Uyghur followers, and inflicted a significant defeat upon the Shiwei. Abo transported all the Uyghurs residing among the Shiwei to regions located north of the desert. Subsequently, the remaining camps dissolved, seeking refuge deep within the mountainous and forested regions. The raiding factions proceeded westward, approaching the Uyghur ruler Panglei in Kucha. At that time, Panglei had proclaimed himself Khagan and governed the cities located to the west of the desert. The individuals who established residence in Gansu (Ganzhou) were never able to restore their previous vitality.[97] Subsequently, the Uyghurs, dispersed across various locations, would resurface as a significant force in Dunhuang, Turfan, and the western regions of East Turkestan. Nevertheless, the sovereign identity and the "dignity of the beyliks" that were established during their governance of the region referred to as "Ötüken" underwent transformation or dissolution in subsequent eras. These former masters and rulers of the "world state," upon leaving the "sacred center," forfeited the "heavenly mandate" that had been conferred upon them. They were divested of the authority to govern the entirety of the Turkish population.

The Geographical Regions of the Uyghur Khaganate

We may gain an insight into the geographical regions and zones of expansion of the Uyghur Khaganate through the examination of both Turkic inscriptions and Chinese historical sources. In the Turkic Inscriptions, particularly in the Tariat Inscription, the geography of the Khaganate is explicitly delineated through the discourse of Moyan Çor:

[97] *Jiu Tang Shu*, p.5215; *Xin Tang Shu*, pp.6232-6233.



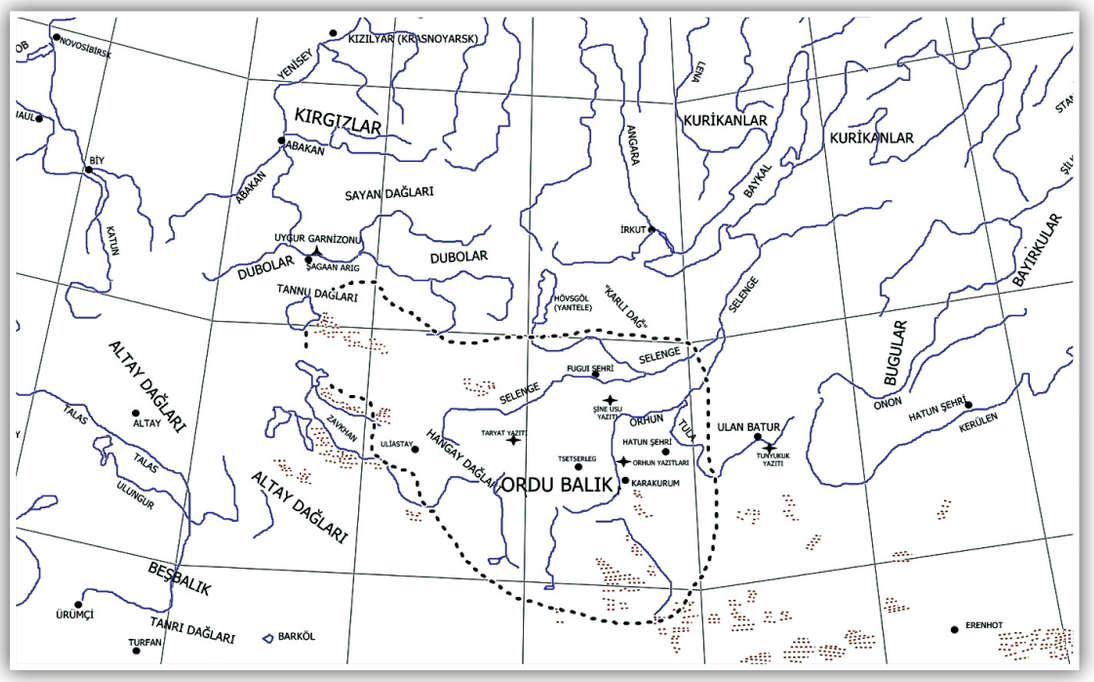
"The eight-branched Selenge, Orkhon, Tola, Sebin, Teledü, Karaga, and Burgu. I inhabit and traverse these lands and waters (within this area). My summer pasture is located at the northwestern periphery of Ötüken, at the source of the Tes River, with the Hanuí and Hünüí Rivers situated to the east. My intrinsic forests, my authentic forests, are situated in the region of Ötüken; Ongı Tarkan Süy and adjacent populations are under the jurisdiction of the Khagan. Its southern boundary is defined by the Altai Mountains, its western boundary by Kögmen (the Tannu-Tuva Mountains), and its eastern boundary is..." *(Tariat, West/4,5)*

Within the Şine Us The Khagan delineates his summer pasture thus: "... I established my authority at the source of the Tes River, located to the west of Kasar. I constructed my enclosure there." During the summer months, I resided there. (East/8) This region is situated along the banks of the Tes River as it feeds into Lake Ubsa, positioned to the south of the Tannu-Ola Mountains in northwestern Mongolia.[98]

The inscriptions refer to military campaigns conducted in the adjacent areas. Numerous river branches and geographical designations such as "Burgu, Bükgük, Yılun Kol" within the Orhun-Selenge basin are referenced. Furthermore, in delineating the maximal extents of these campaigns, the Chinese segment of the Karabalgasun Inscription mentions the Uyghurs' expeditions to the Syr Darya (line 16) and Fergana (line 20). A plethora of additional examples pertaining to these geographical designations can similarly be provided.

Chinese sources indicate that Chapter 217 of the Xin Tang Shu, which focuses on the Uyghurs, furnishes certain details regarding their territories of expansion. Given the extensive discourse regarding internal conflicts in China and the military aid extended by the Uyghurs, the geographical locations referenced are frequently situated within the boundaries of Chinese territory. Nevertheless, through the analysis of specific place names and expressions, it is feasible to deduce the approximate geographic distribution of the Uyghurs, which in actuality exhibits considerable similarity to the territories occupied by the Huns and the Göktürks.

[98] Saadettin Gömeç, "Kök Türkçe Yazıtlarda Geçen Göller ve Nehirler", *Turkish Studies*, II/4 (2007), p.1288.



Map 2. Approximate Boundaries of the Khaganate Center According to the Tariat Inscription [99]

According to the "Uyghurs" segment of the source, the Uyghurs under the governance of the First Göktürk State predominantly resided in regions situated north of the Gobi Desert and north of the Sir Tardush, specifically along the banks of the Selenge (Suoling) River.[100] In approximately 630, Pusa established an alliance with the Sir Tardush and successfully vanquished the Göktürks at Malie Mountain (now known as the Hangay Mountains), compelling them to retreat northward to the "God Mountain" (the elevated regions of the Hangay Mountains).[101] Consequently, the Uyghurs migrated significantly southward from the banks of the Selenge River, successfully overcame the Göktürks, and drove them from the south towards the northern Hangay Mountains. Consequently, approximately in 630, concurrent with the decline of the First Göktürk State, the Uyghurs had established hegemony over the regions situated between the Selenge and Ork-

99 Edited and illustrated by Kürşat Yıldırım.

100 *Xin Tang Shu*, p.6111.

101 *Xin Tang Shu,* s.6112.

hon rivers. Subsequently, Pusa established his headquarters along the banks of the Tula (Dule) River.[102] Consequently, following their complete emancipation from Göktürk governance, they relocated their administrative hub further east to the banks of the Tula River. As the Uyghurs became more formidable, they exerted pressure on the Sir Tarduş, driving them southward to the Alaşan Mountains, into the Gansu region, and subsequently appropriated their territories.[103] Subsequently, the Uyghurs expanded their territory as far as the borders of Gansu.

In 646, the Uyghurs migrated southward, traversed the Ala Shan Mountains, and arrived at the shores of the Yellow River. They dispatched emissaries and offered tribute to the imperial court of China. Due to their triumph over the Sir Tardush, Uyghur emissaries were accorded considerable respect at the Chinese court. Subsequently, the Töles tribes and the Uyghurs were subjugated under Chinese rule. China, having subjugated the Göktürks, established administrative regions referred to as the Yanran Prefecture between 647 and 648 to oversee the steppe.[104] Consequently, the Yanran Prefecture was under the jurisdiction of the Uyghurs. The purported administrative divisions utilized by China to govern the Töles and Uyghur tribes consisted of Chinese designations assigned to the steppe landscape dating back to pre-Common Era times. With the exception of a select few, these names lack specific geographic delineations.

Following the formation of the Uyghur Khaganate, historical sources indicate that its territories extended eastward to the Shiwei, westward to the Altai Mountains, and southward to the Gobi Desert, thereby encompassing all the previous territories of the Huns.[105]

The Uyghurs undertook expeditions southward into Gansu and Eastern Turkestan during the years 646 and 648. The Göktürk leader Ashina Helu carried out an incursion into Beshbalik. However, Porun (d. 661) aided the Chinese forces and successfully reclaimed the city.[106] Throughout the Bisu period, the Uyghurs continued to maintain the administrative structure referred to as the "Yanran" Provincial Administration.

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102 *Xin Tang Shu*, p.6112; Gülçin Çandarlıoğlu, *Uyghur Devletleri Tarihi ve Kültürü*, Istanbul 2004, pp.11-12.

103 *Xin Tang Shu*, p.6112.

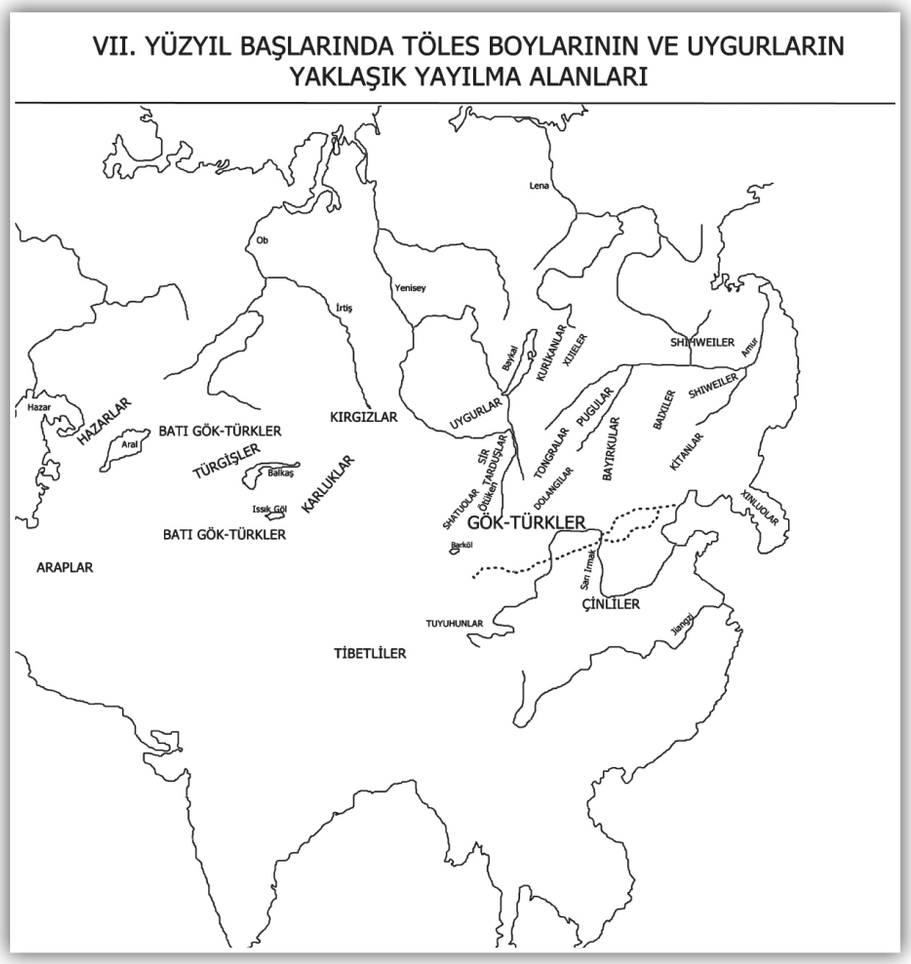
104 *Gujin Xingshi Shu Bianzheng*, Jianghsi Renmin Chubanshe Yayınları, Nanchang 2006, p.107.

105 *Jiu Tang Shu*, p.5198; *Xin Tang Shu*, p.6115.

106 *Xin Tang Shu*, s.6113.

During this period, the Gobi Desert delineated the boundary with China, and the majority of tribes situated north of the desert were subordinate to the Uyghurs.[107]

After the establishment of the Second Göktürk Khaganate, Kapgan Khagan recaptured the former lands of the Töles. Subsequently, the three tribes named Qibi, Sijie, and Hun fled south of the desert and settled between Ganzhou and Liangzhou, in the Gansu region.[108]



Map 3. The Töles and Uyghurs at the Beginning of the 7th Century[109]

[107] *Xin Tang Shu*, p.6114.

[108] *Xin Tang Shu*, p.6114.

[109] Edited and illustrated by Kürşat Yıldırım.



THE UYGHUR STATE

In 716, following the Uyghurs' aid to the Chinese in the demise of Kapgan and their subsequent defeat by Bilge Khagan, the Uyghur Ilteber along with various tribes, including the Tongra and Xi,[110] sought refuge and were established to the north of the Chinese Taiwu[111] Army.[112] This event is recorded in the inscriptions as: "The Uyghur Ilteber fled eastward with about a hundred soldiers" (Bilge Khagan, East/37).

Following the year 742, the Uyghur leader proclaimed himself Khagan. The Uyghurs established their residence in the southern region of the Göktürk domain. They relocated their headquarters from the Ötüken Mountain (Wudejian Shan) to the Orkhon River (Kunhe). This location was situated 850 km (1700 li) south of Xicheng. Xicheng was situated at the Gaoque[113] periphery of China during the Han dynasty. Located to the north, it was 150 kilometers (300 li) distant from the periphery of the Gobi Desert. The Uyghurs assumed control over the territories previously inhabited by the Nine Oghuz.[114]

In 756, the Uyghur Khagan allied with the Shuofang Commander and were victorious over the Tongra and other tribes along the Yellow River. The Khagan met with the Commander in the Huyan Valley [115] and took possession of the lands of those tribes.[116]

In 840, the Kyrgyz launched an assault on the Uyghur capital, resulting in the death of the Khagan and the dispersal of the entire population. Fifteen clans sought refuge with the Karluks. The remaining Uyghurs migrated to the regions inhabited by Tibetans and to Kucha. Subsequently, thirteen families located at the center of the khaganate designated Wujie Tegin as Khagan. They established their encampment in the southern region, located at Mount Cuozi on the northern boundary of the Inner Mongolian Middle Urad Banner.[117]

Thus, it is understood from the sources that the Uyghurs, whose original homeland was the shores of the Selenge River and who, after the fall of their khaganate,

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110 These Xili are distinct from the Mongol Tatabï, also recorded as Xi, and are of Turkic origin.

111 It was in the village of Mayi, 30 kilometres northeast of Shuozhou in present-day Shanxi.

112 *Xin Tang Shu*, p.6114.

113 It is located at the entrance of the hill on the southern slope of Kara Narin Mountain, southwest of the Middle Urad Banner in Inner Mongolia; see *Zhongguo Lishi Diming Da Cidian*, ed. Shih Weile, Beijing 2005, p. 2178.

114 *Xin Tang Shu*, p.6114.

115 It is Montenegro (Heishan), northwest of Bugutu Khota City in Inner Mongolia.

116 *Xin Tang Shu*, p.6115.

117 *Xin Tang Shu*, p.6130-6131.

primarily fled to Beşbalık and Gansu,[118] over the course of 250 years, from the early 7th century to the mid-9th century, to the following regions in succession: Throughout their subordination to the First Göktürk State, they inhabited the region south of Lake Baikal, specifically along the Selenge River; following their secession from the Göktürks, they established themselves between the Selenge and Orkhon rivers, particularly along the Tula River; during the Second Göktürk State, it is likely that they were again situated on the more northern banks of the Selenge River, as well as in Gansu and Shanxi; during the Uyghur Khaganate, their presence was noted between the Orkhon River and Ötüken Mountain; and subsequent to the collapse of the Khaganate, they were observed in substantial numbers in East Turkestan, the Karluk regions of western East Turkestan, Inner Mongolia, and Gansu. Consequently, the Uyghurs relinquished their steppe state centers and traditional habitats, migrating westward and southward into a markedly distinct geographical landscape. Consequently, the subsequent historical trajectory of the Uyghurs diverged significantly.



Map 4. The Uyghur Khaganate (First Quarter of the 9th Century)[119]

[118] *Shiratori Kurakichi Zenshū*, C. IV, Tokyo 1970, p.519.

[119] *Türk Devletleri Tarih ve Kültür Atlası*, pp.84-85 (Map drawn by Kürşat Yıldırım and illustrated by C. Şahin-F. Özcan).



The Society and Economy

Similar to other Turkic tribes, the Uyghurs were structured as a characteristic nomadic tribal confederation. The individuals managed their livestock in accordance with the availability of water and pasture resources. Chinese sources indicate that in the nascent years of the Göktürk Khaganate, the Uyghurs were capable of assembling an army of 50,000 soldiers, with their overall population estimated at approximately 100,000 individuals. The terrain in which they resided was characterized by sand, stone, and salinity, and the predominant animal they reared was a large-hooved variety of sheep.[120] The primary dietary component for the Uyghurs was meat, while their principal beverage was kumis (fermented mare's milk). In delineating the practices of the Manichaean monks who arrived among the Uyghurs, it is observed that, in contrast to the Uyghur lifestyle, they abstained from consuming meat and drinking kumis.[121] The Uyghurs possessed camels as well; among the animals they offered to the Chinese court in 821, camels were featured. The Uyghurs of the Uyghur Khaganate resided in tents. This held true not only for the general populace but also for tribal leaders and the Khagan himself. Indeed, Tamim ibn Bahr, who traveled to the Uyghur central city of Karabalgasun in 821, noted that he observed the golden tent of the Khagan from a distance of five farsakhs, emphasizing its considerable size, capable of housing up to one hundred individuals, and its location atop the fortress.[122] Limited records exist regarding the products manufactured and the livestock raised by the Uyghurs during the Uyghur Khaganate. A Tang Hui Yao serves as one of the few available sources. As indicated by this source, the items offered by the Uyghur delegation to the Chinese court in 821 included rough cloth produced from camel wool, sable pelts, and jade waist belts referred to as "duckhead" belts.[123] This record may at least provide some insight into the types of goods and produce produced. In addition, a number of sources from the period after the Uyghurs had settled in East Turkestan also prove valuable information. One such source is *Ḥudūd al-ʿĀlam*, written in 982, a few decades after the Uyghurs had deserted the steppe en masse. The narration is as follows: "From their summer and winter pastures come fine musk, black, red, and striped fox furs, grey squirrel, sable, ermine, fennec, and sābija furs, ḫutūww horns, and the hides of the yak."[124] Despite its limited prevalence resulting from the climatic conditions and geography of the steppe, it is recog-

[120] *Jiu Tang Shu*, p.5195.

[121] *Xin Tang Shu*, p.6126.

[122] V. Minorsky, "Tamim ibn Baḥr's Journey to the Uyghurs", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, XII/2 (1948), p.283.

[123] *Tang Hui Yao*, Zhonghua Shuju, Beijing 1998, p.1748.

[124] Ramazan Şeşen, *İslâm Coğrafyacılarına Göre Türkler ve Türk Ülkeleri*, TTK, Ankara 2001, p.62.



nized that the Uyghurs participated in certain agricultural practices. Indeed, Tamim ibn Baḥr documented that throughout his travels, he traversed villages in close proximity and agricultural lands over a period of twenty days, observing that the practice of agriculture was prevalent in the regions surrounding the Uyghur capital.[125] Furthermore, notwithstanding their modest population figures, the Uyghurs also established village communities and urban centers. The most prominent among these settlements were the capital, Ordu Balık (also referred to as Karabalgasun), and an additional city known as Bay Balık. Tamim ibn Baḥr characterized Ordu Balık in the following manner: "The city was equipped with twelve substantial iron gates. It was heavily populated and included marketplaces along with diverse forms of commerce."

The Uyghur society exemplified a characteristic Turkic steppe society. The system was patriarchal and founded on the framework of the nuclear family. Social classes and class stratification were nonexistent. The society did not encompass a slave class, and no group was regarded as being superior to any other. In the nomadic-pastoral economic system, each person held their own property and grazing lands. Individual liberty and private property were safeguarded by the state under the auspices of töre (customary law).

The State Administration

The state administration of the Uyghur Khaganate adhered to the conventional framework characteristic of the Turkic steppe polities, a tradition that can be traced to the era of the Huns. This type of political framework was established via a confederation of various tribal groups. The state was bifurcated into two wings: the left (east) and the right (west), with the eastern wing possessing precedence. At the forefront of each wing was positioned the Khagan (Kaghan), the sovereign authority. The Khagan's authority to govern all tribes, and indeed humanity, was perceived to originate from kut, a divine power conferred by Tengri (Heaven). This kut was possessed by a specific family or dynasty within the state. For the Uyghurs, the prevailing dynasty was the Yaglakar. The arrangement of titles subordinate to the Khagan, ranked from highest to lowest, was as follows: Yabgu, Ilteber, and Erkin. The original designation of the Uyghur tribal leader was Erkin. Gradually, he attained the rank of Ilteber, and shortly prior to the formation of the Khaganate, he acquired the title of Yabgu. The sons and nephews of the Khagan held the titles Tegin and Shad. The designated heir typically ascended to the roles of Yabgu or Shad, and heirs were additionally classified as Left and Right Shads, with the Left (eastern) Shad regarded as superior. As Moyanchur Khagan famously remarked, "I conferred upon my two sons the titles Yabgu and Shad" (Shine-Usu, East/7). The Yabgus and Shads were designated as administrators for the tribes

[125] Minorsky, "Tamim ibn Baḥr's", p.283.

situated beyond the central region. The Khagan's spouse bore the title Katun (or Khatun), which represented a role of significant importance within the administrative and ceremonial framework of the Uyghur state. When ministers and other officials were presented before the Khagan, they were additionally mandated to offer a bow in acknowledgment of the Katun.[126]

Prior to the establishment of the Khaganate, the Uyghurs endeavored to establish a state organization. Sources indicate that Tumidu, previously under Chinese authority, clandestinely proclaimed himself "Khagan" post-646 CE and designated six Dış Buyruk Başı (Outer Commanders), three İç Buyruk Başı (Inner Commanders), along with a Tutuq ("military governor"; dudu), generals, and assistants. This likely pertains to the Khagan's selection of nine tribal chiefs (uruk beys) within the Nine Oghuz confederation: three identified as from the "Inner Oghuz" and six from the "Outer Oghuz," collectively designated as Buyruk Başı. The designation Buyruk Başı, referenced in Turkic inscriptions (Tariat, West/6), is equivalent to the contemporary role of "Prime Minister." The tribal leaders were likely conferred the title Tutuq, and with the addition of the Basmil and Karluk tribes, the total number rose to eleven. Tamim ibn Baḥr, who traveled to the Uyghur region in 821, indicated that the Uyghurs possessed seventeen military governors.[127] This was probably because of the inclusion of the nine Oghuz tribes with eight Oghuz clans (excluding the Khagan's own Yaglakar clan).[128] In general, the central administration of the Uyghur Khaganate was structured in this fashion. Moreover, there existed ministers at the central level, who were presumably designated as Buyruk. Although all the titles referenced were of Turkic origin, there were additionally foreign ministers. Significantly, Sogdian merchants, who wielded substantial influence in the Uyghur capital, frequently held ministerial positions. In a similar vein, the majority of Katuns (queens or aristocratic women) were of Chinese descent.[129] A Chinese document clearly outines the hierarchical structure within the central administration; it comprises a list of endowments: "The Khagan, the Katun, the Left and Right Shads, the Military Governors (Tutuq; dudu), the Inner and Outer Buyruk Başis, and all individuals of subordinate ranks were awarded revenues commensurate with 2,000 households (akin to a feudal income)."[130] This list demonstrates that the *Tutuqs* held a higher rank than the Inner and Outer *Buyruk Başis*.

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126 *Xin Tang Shu*, p.6130.

127 Minorsky, "Tamim ibn Baḥr's", p.284.

128 İbrahim Kafesoğlu, *Türk Millî Kültürü*, Ötüken Publishers, Istanbul 2003, p.132.

129 According to one estimate, the consorts of 7 out of 13 Khagans were Chinese princesses; C. Mackerras, "The Uighurs," trans. Ş. Tekin, The Cambridge History of Early Inner Asia, ed. D. Sinor, 4th ed., İletişim Publishers, Istanbul, 2003, p. 436.

130 *Jiu Tang Shu*, p.5204.



In addition to the central administration, it is recognized that numerous other offices, official designations, and title constituents existed. These encompassed Bilge, Ülüg, Tarkan, Ishvara (Ishbara), Külüg, Tuykun, Çigşi, Apa, Baga, Alp, Akınçı, Yargan, Sengün ("general"), Buyruk, Çor, Boyla, Öge, İl Ögesi, Çavuş (Çabış), Tay, and Bey (Beg), among others. Certain titles were designated for civilian use, while others were specifically military, and a subset incorporated both civilian and military roles. For instance, Sengün was exclusively engaged in military affairs, whereas Tuykun was a solely civilian functionary working within the state council.[131] In the military organization, the titles of *Yüzbaşı* (Captain), *Beşyüzbaşı* (Five Hundred Captain), *Dokuzyüzbaşı* (Nine Hundred Captain), *Binbaşı* (Major), and *Beşbinbaşı* (Five Thousand Captain) are attested (Tariat, West/6-8). The *Beşbinbaşı* corresponded to the *Sengün* or "General" in Turkic sources.

The Issue of the Manichaean Religion

One of the most noteworthy subjects in the history of the Uyghur Khaganate is the adoption of Manichaeism by Bögü Khagan. Numerous interpretations have been offered on this topic, some of which diverge in distinct directions and occasionally contradict historical evidence. Consequently, it is advantageous to regard the phenomenon of religious conversion as a separate and distinct matter.

Chinese sources contain no information about Bögü Khagan's adherence to Manichaeism. Actually, it is infeasible to formulate a conclusive interpretation based on historical documentation. Most interpretations rely on religious texts produced during the era of the Turfan Uyghurs. For instance, as evidenced by an account within the Turfan texts, it is purported that Bögü Khagan implemented a system of organization by designating one individual for every ten persons to "promote virtuous conduct," which implies the instruction of this religion.[132] It is not feasible to discuss such a social and administrative framework within the Uyghur Khaganate. Chinese sources indicate that there is inadequate evidence to suggest that Manichaeism induced any alteration in the operational framework of the state.

Consequently, the overwhelming proportion of Uyghurs continued to practice the traditional Turkic religion. Certain interpretations regarding this subject must be supported by historical sources. For example, assertions that the Uyghurs were familiar with Buddhism as early as the Göktürk period, that the title Pusa İlteber originates from the Sanskrit word "Bodhisattva," and that a significant segment of the population adhered

[131] In relation to these titles, see A. Donuk, *Eski Türk Devletlerinde İdarî-Askerî Ünvan ve Terimler*, Türk Dünyası Araştırmaları Vakfı, Istanbul 1988.

[132] S. Tekin, "Mani Dininin Uyghurlar Tarafından Devlet Dini Olarak Kabul Edilişinin 1200. Yıldönümü Dolayısı ile Birkaç Not (762-1962)", *Türk Dili Araştırmaları Yıllığı Belleten*, X (1962), p.8.

to Buddhism at the inception of the Uyghur Khaganate necessitate stronger substantiation[133] through primary sources. Furthermore, explanations pertaining to the designation "Pusa" are predominantly conjectural.

The idea that the Uyghurs regularly travelled to the Chinese capital accompanied by Manichaean priests is not accurate.[134] Chinese sources clearly record that the Uyghurs began to visit the Chinese court with Manichaeans only after the year 806.[135] In this instance, it can be asserted that the impact of Manichaeism notably increased, particularly with the migration of the Uyghurs to East Turkestan. In addition to this, there exists no historical record suggesting that the Uyghurs extensively embraced this religion during the Khaganate era, apart from the intricate religious themes evident in the Chinese inscription of the Karabalgasun Monument.

There exists additionally the phenomenon of the Uyghur Khagans incorporating the prefix "ay" (which signifies "moon") into their titles, an occurrence that has garnered considerable scholarly debate. Bahaeddin Ögel asserts that the moon possessed considerable significance within the framework of Manichaeism. Historically, Uyghur Khagans sourced their kut (divine mandate) and authority from the heavens; however, following their conversion to Manichaeism, they began to derive their power from the moon, which resulted in the incorporation of "ay" at the commencement of their titles. Consequently, the effects of Manichaeism started to become evident in the official titles of the Turkic state.[136] Nevertheless, the assertion that all Uyghur Khagans incorporated the prefix "ay" into their titles subsequent to Bögü is not completely precise. The prefix "ay" is not found in the titles adopted by the Khagans themselves; instead, it is present in the title patents issued by the Chinese Emperor. Furthermore, the Chinese section of the Karabalgasun Inscription—which is partially a Manichaean document—omits the prefix "ay" in the Khagan titles enumerated therein. Based on available records, thirteen Khagans governed from the era of Bögü Khagan until 848 CE, with only four of these individuals possessing the prefix "ay" in their Chinese-issued title documents. Furthermore, these conferred titles also encompassed Chinese honorary distinctions in conjunction with the prefix "ay." Neither the inscriptions nor the Chinese sources document the presence of the prefix "ay" in any of the titles adopted by the Khagans themselves.

It is undeniable that certain Uyghurs—particularly those who regularly traveled to and from China for commercial purposes—adopted Manichaeism; nevertheless, a

133 Özkan İzgi, *Kutluk Bilge Kül Kağan-Bögü Kağan ve Uyghurlar*, Ankara 1986, p.22.

134 İzgi, *Kutluk Bilge Kül Kağan*, pp.26-27.

135 *Xin Tang Shu*, p.6126.

136 Bahaeddin Ögel, *Dünden Bugüne Türk Kültürünün Gelişme Çağları*, Türk Dünyası Araştırmaları Vakfı Publishers, Istanbul 2001, pp.183-185.



widespread conversion of the Uyghur population to this faith did not transpire. According to certain scholars, Bögü's conversion to Manichaeism was motivated by apprehensions regarding the maintenance of his autonomy in the context of relations with China, as the Chinese exhibited considerable animosity towards this religion. Moreover, the economic influence of the Sogdians was of utmost importance to Bögü. Indeed, Bögü served as a benefactor of Manichaeism in China, aiding the construction of Manichaean temples in two Chinese capital cities. In conclusion, notwithstanding Bögü Kaghan's initiatives, the Uyghurs predominantly maintained their adherence to their traditional religious practices.[137] Moreover, even at the height of Bögü's power, the introduction of Manichaeism into the Uyghur domains faced resistance from state officials, as is documented even in Manichaean texts composed in Turfan.[138]

Following the year 805, it is explicitly indicated in historical sources that at least during the rule of Tengriye Alp Külüg Bilge Khagan, the Manichaeans commenced their involvement in governmental matters. This advancement is probably associated with the impact of Sogdian traders. Nevertheless, from that time forward, the influence of the Manichaean religion on state and society remains a subject of scholarly debate. The matter primarily exhibits a political aspect concerning the Sogdians. If Manichaeism had achieved widespread adoption at the state and societal levels, it is likely that Manichaean priests would have participated in state ceremonies and that Manichaean rituals would have been observed. For instance, the ceremony conducted in 822 for the Chinese princess designated to assume the role of the Khagan's "Khatun" is meticulously outlined in Chinese texts. While the ceremony possessed religious importance, traditional Turkic religious practices remained prevalent, and there is no reference to any Manichaean rituals or the existence of Manichaean clerics during the occasion. Moreover, during the era succeeding Khagan Bögü, it is clear that shamans continued to wield significant influence within society, and their prophecies were regarded with trust, notwithstanding the vehement rejection of shamanism by Manichaeism. Furthermore, there exists no evidence suggesting the existence of a pervasive Manichaean community. Simultaneously, certain scholars contend that Bögü sought to maintain the vigor of the Uyghurs by embracing the education and discipline associated with the Manichaean faith.[139] In examining the interest of Khagan Bögü and specific state officials in Manichaeism, it is essential to consider the impact of the Sogdian merchant class of the period, especially since the Uyghurs had established highly advantageous trade relations with China.

[137] Mackerras, "Uyghurlar", pp.443-444, 448.

[138] Tekin, "Mani Dininin", pp.7-8.

[139] Mackerras, "Uygurlar", p.457.

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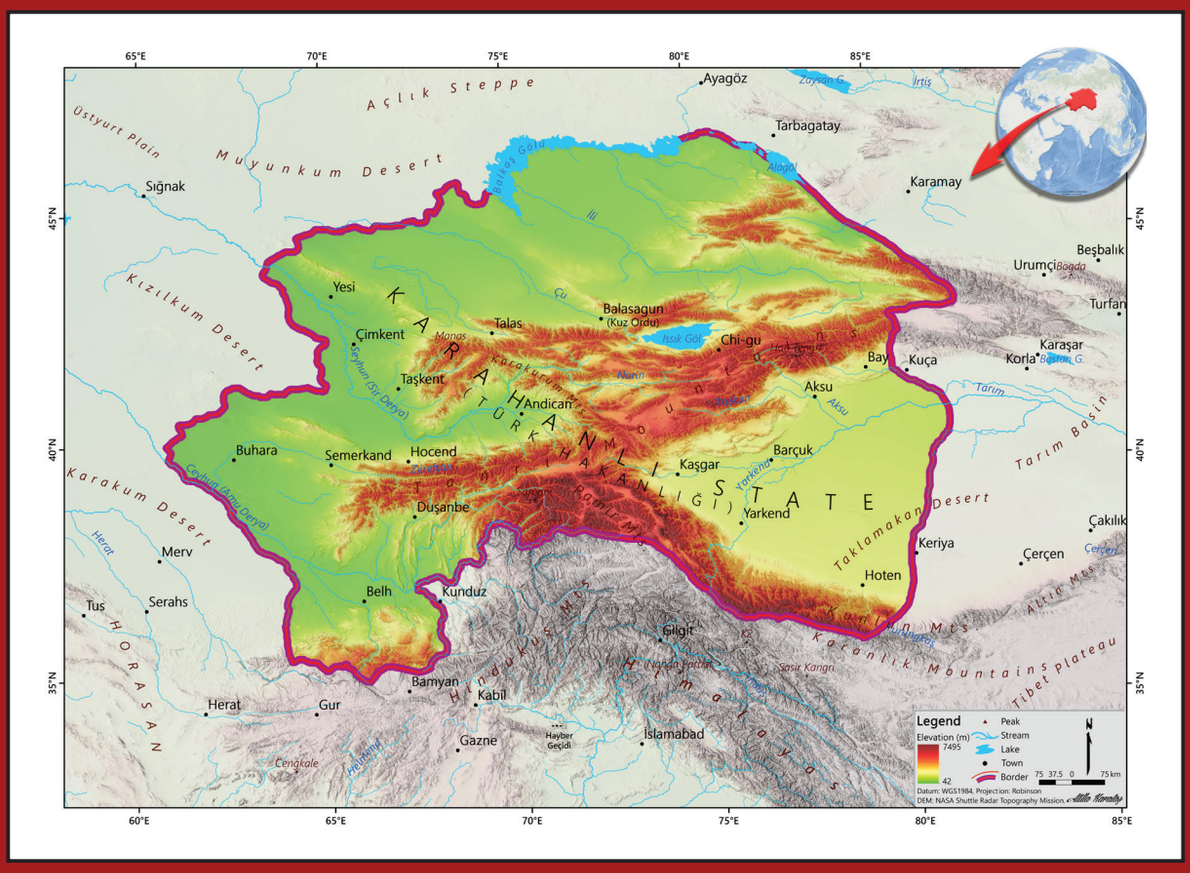
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The Turkic Khaganate (Karakhanid State)



Source: Atilla Karataş Collection



THE TURKIC KHAGANATE (KARAKHANID STATE)

(766-1212)

Ömer Soner HUNKAN*

Introduction

In accordance with the Turkish state tradition, the "Nine Tuğlu" signifies the highest level of hierarchy, and the Turkish Khaganate is pin-pointed by historical sources as the inaugural Turkish state to embrace the term "Turk" as its official name.[1] Likewise, the Turkish Khaganate is recognized as the inaugural Turkish state in which Khagans and members of the governing family personally inscribed the term "Turk" on their coins. Subsequent to the Orkhon Inscriptions, it was also members of the ruling family of this state who incorporated the term "Turk" in their inscriptions.[2] In a similar vein, outside of the Islamic realm, the Turkish Khaganate was one of the first to widely adopt Islam. It was the first

1 İbnü'l-Esîr "El-Hâniyye/Hâkâniyyetü'l-Etrâk", Kaşgarlı Mahmud "Et-Türkü'l-Hakaniyye" and Ömer Hayyam, "Devletü Türk" the name of the kingship is explained in detail below under the heading "The Name of the State and the Origin of the Dynasty".

2 According to numismatic and inscriptional data, the use of the name "Turk" by the family of kings for themselves is given below under the heading "The Name of the State and the Origin of the Dynasty".

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Turkish state to begin acquiring and populating Islamic lands under the aegis of a newly-adopted Muslim Turkish identity. This marks the beginning of the Turkish dominance and leadership in the Islamic world. The Turkish Khaganate's constituent group, the Karluk (Argu) Turks, wrote the first interlinear version of the Qur'an in their dialect. This state was the first to begin the gradual transition from the Sogdian script to the Arabic alphabet during that time. Originating in the Turkish Khaganate, the earliest Turkish-Islamic archival texts are written in both Arabic and Sogdian characters.[3] The Hanafi-Maturidi school and the Yesevi spiritual heritage were first infused into Turkish identity when the Turkish Khaganate adopted and advanced these foundations. In addition to old Turkish customary law, this Turkish Khaganate was the first to formalize Islamic law as a sovereign legal system. The Tamgach Khan Ibrahim Madrasa is the earliest modern-type madrasa constructed by the Turks for Islamic culture, dating back to the Turkish Khaganate era, as evidenced by its surviving endowment deed. The collective cultural heritage of the Turkic world, as demonstrated by figures such as Mahmud al-Kashgari and Yusuf Has Hajib—both associated with the Turkish Khaganate—and their works Divanü Lügati't-Türk and Kutadgu Bilig, respectively, continues to promote cohesion throughout the Turkic sphere around the concepts of "Turk" and the "Turkish language." The first Muslim Turkic Khagan, Gazi Satuk Buğra Kara Khagan, constitutes a notable individual in the developmental phase of Turkic-Islamic history. His conversion to Islam had implications not only for the Khaganate but also for Turks, Arabs, Persians, and the broader course of global history. The inaugural military-backed bureaucratic-ulema coup in Turkic-Islamic history—an event marked by social phenomena that were either relinquished, altered, amalgamated, or sustained in conflict after assimilation into the Islamic domain—transpired during the era of the Turkish Khaganate. The distinction between nomadic and sedentary lifestyles is commonly recognized as a significant factor in the disintegration of Turkic states, attributable to the difficulties in integrating cultural prac-

[3] In 1911, fifteen documents of the Eastern Turkic Khaganate were found in the gardens outside Yarkend, Documents including Arabic and Turkish court judgements and bills of exchange, E. Denison Ross through the use of the Library of the School of Oriental and African Studies, Located in M63. One of the Arabic documents containing the names and titles of Tamgaç Khan Hasan (462-496/1069-1103) and his son Çağrı Tegin was published by Barthold. Refer to V.V. Barthold, "Kutadgu Bilig'in Zikrettiği Buğra Han Kimdir?", *Türkiyat Mecmuası*, I (Istanbul 1925), p.221-226. Five of the Turkish documents written in Uyghur script were published by Ş. Tekin, Şinasi Tekin, "Bilinen En Eski İslami Türkçe Metinler: Uygur Harfleriyle Yazılmış Karahanlılar Devrine Âit Tarla Satış Senetleri (473, 483=1080, 1090)", *SAD*, IV (1975), 157-186.



tices and civilizational developments. This phenomenon initially manifests itself in the alienation of the state's fundamental component, culminating in its eventual overthrow. Fundamentally, the Turkish Khaganate wielded substantial influence, to differing degrees, over all Turkic-Islamic states of its time and thereafter, encompassing a wide geographic area from east to west and north to south, consequently acting as a paradigm for many succeeding entities.

The Name and Origins of the States

With regard to the designation "Kara" employed by the Karakhanids, Russian scholar Grigorev remarked in an 1874 publication that the term "Karakhanids" was introduced by Tsarist Russian policy to replace the term "Turk." This terminology has since garnered broad acceptance within academic circles and remains in use currently.[4] Similarly, it is known that some researchers prefer less authentic names such as "İlig Khans"[5] or "Buğra Khans." Nevertheless, the initial designations of the state are documented in the sources, thereby eliminating any potential ambiguity regarding this matter. In the sources, the initial designation of the state is recorded under various titles, reflecting its heritage, geographical positioning, and administrative framework. In light of the dynasty's lineage going back as far as Afrāsyāb, also recognized as Tonga Alp Er, in historical sources the state was called as follows: "Âl-i Afrāsyāb et-Türkî," as well as by the terms Afrāsyāblılar (Afrāsyābites), Afrāsyāb Oğulları (Sons of Afrāsyāb), Afrāsyāblı Hanlar (Khans of Afrāsyāb), Afrāsyāblı Sultanlar (Sultans of Afrāsyāb), and Afrāsyāblı Emîrler

4 V.V. Grigorev, "Karakhanidy v Maveranagre, po Tarkhi Muneddzhim-bashı" v Osmanskom tekste, s perevodom i primechaniiami V. V. Grigor'eva, *TVORAO*, 17 (1874), p.189-258.

5 "İlig Han", in the sources, the term was employed solely to refer to third-tier administrators of the khanate governing Transoxiana. Consequently, the term "İlig Khans" is not found in the sources as an appellation for the entirety of the realm. Furthermore, the designation "ilig khan" has been utilized inconsistently and imprecisely by certain medieval authors in a way that defies hierarchical accuracy. Given that "ilig," functioning as a lower-tiered designation, cannot precede "khan" as a qualifier, the employment of the term "ilig khan" is incorrect. Numismatic evidence consistently exhibits "ilig" following "khan." Furthermore, the differentiation between "khan" and "ilig" is explicitly delineated in the writings of the modern historian Abu'l-Fazl Bayhaqi. Another historian, Juvayni, unequivocally asserts that the title "ilig" held a subordinate status compared to that of "khan.". On this topic refer to Ömer Soner Hunkan, "Târîh-i Beyhakî'de Sözü Edilen Türkistan Hanları "Han ve İlig" Hakkında", *Gazi Üniversitesi Gazi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi*, 29 (2009), p.19-28; C. E. Bosworth, "İlig-Khans or Karakhanids", *EI²*, III, p.1113-1117.

(Emirs of Afrāsyāb).[6] Considering that Afrāsyāb historically embodies a lineage of the Ashina clan, the ruling dynasty descended from Afrāsyāb identified themselves as "Turk" in their coinage and inscriptions, echoing the custom of the Göktürks. For example, titles such as Türk Hakan Harun Buğra Han, Türk Tuğrul Hakan, and Yağan Türk Tegin are documented in the sources.[7] The medieval chroniclers who wrote about the Turks emphasised this by including their names alongside the name "Turk," exemplified by figures such as Commander Prince Subaşı Tegin, Sovereign Qadir Khan, Khan Togan, and Ruler Ilig Khan of the Turks.[8] In relation to the names of the state territories, the chronicles use terms such as "The Land of the Turan," "Turkestan," and the "Khans/Khaganate of Turkestan."[9] Given that Afrâsyâb's "hakan" sons were all entitled "khans" within their system of governance, the use of the terms "Sons of the Khagan," "Khanate family," and "Khaganate rulers" was commonplace.[10] Ibn al-Athir recorded the state's name in his work as "al-Hâniyya / Hâkâniyyat al-Atrâk," which denoted the Turkish Khanate or Turkish Khaganate.[11] In contrast, Kāshghari Mahmud employs the term "et-Türkü'l-Hâkâniyye," which has the meaning of "the Turkish Khaganate" or "the Khaganate Turks."[12] In fact, Omar Khayyam, who visited Khagan Shams al-Mulk Nasr in Bukhara, showed high regard and honor by complimenting the khaganate as the

6 İbnü'l-Esîr, *El-Kâmil fi't-Târîh*, pub. A. el-Kâdî, IX, Beyrut 1995, p.320 ve VIII, p.499; Avfî, *Cevâmiü'l-Hikâyât ve Levâmiü'r-Rivâyât*, pub. V. Barthold, *Turkestan*, I, Petersburg 1898, p.94; Cüzcânî, *Tabakât-ı Nâsırî*, nşr. Abdü'l-Hay Habîbî, I, Dünyâ-yı Kitâb, Tahran 1363, p.245, 247, 252, 307, 309, 403; Cüveynî, *Târîh-i Cihân Güşâ*, trans. M. Öztürk, KB Publications, Ankara 1998, s.305; Karşî *Târîh-i Cihân Güşâ*, trans. M. Öztürk, KB Publications, Ankara 1898, p.130; *İnşâ,* pub. V. Barthold, *Turkestan,* I, Petersburg 1898, p.27.

7 İşanhanov ve Koçnev, "Drevneyşie Karahanidskie Monety", *İMKU*, Vıpusk 15 (1979), p.146; Pritsak, "Karahanlılar" *İA*, VI, 1997, p.270; Koçnev "The Origins of the Karakhanids: A reconsideration", *Der İslam Bd.* 73, Wolter de Gruyter, 1996, p.355.

8 Curfâdekânî, *Tercüme-i Târîh-i Yemînî*, nşr. C. Şiâr, İntişârât-ı İlmî ve Ferhengî, Tahran 1374, p.294; Gerdîzî *Târîh-i Gerdîzî*, pub. Abdü'l-Hay Habîbî, Dünyâ-yı Kitâb, Tahran 1363, p.388; Cüzcânî I, p.230.

9 Beyhakî *Târîh-i Beyhakî*, pub. A. E. Feyyâz, İntişârât-ı Dânişgâh-ı Firdevsî, Meşhed 1977, p.87, 103, 667, 944; Nizâmü'l-Mülk, *Siyâset-Nâme*, ed. M. A. Köymen, Ankara 1982, p.148, 163; Cüzcânî I, p.230, 254; Şebânkâreî, *Mecmau'l-Ensâb*, pub. M. H. Muhaddis, İntişârât-ı Emîr-i Kebir, Tahran 1376, p.59.

10 Mahmud Kaşgarî, *Divânü Lügâti't-Türk*, trans. B. Atalay, I, TDK Publications, Ankara 1992, p.30.

11 İbnü'l-Esîr, IX 1995, p.320, 385.

12 Mahmud Kaşgari, *Divanü Lügati't-Türk*, Tıpkı Basım, Kültür Bakanlığı, Ankara 1990, p.6. Yaprak Ön Yüz.



"Turkish State" in a couplet.[13] Considering the arguments presented, it is logical for term "Turkic Khaganate" to be the preferred term. This is both one of the first names of the khaganate in the sources and refers to its origin, rather than fabricated names such as "Karakhanids," a term that does not appear in any known sources and was coined by Orientalists with the intention of obscuring the name "Turk."

The Political History of the Turkic Khaganate

All available sources concur that the governing lineage of the Turkic Khaganate was affiliated with the Ashina[14] lineage and traced their ancestry back to Afrāsyāb. In this respect, the Turkic Khaganate can be said to be a continuation of the Göktürks. The primordial Turkic group responsible for establishing the Khaganate was the Karluks. Several theories that attribute the establishment of the state to various tribes, including the Yagma, Turkmen, Chigil, and Ezgish, among others, have been extensively discussed in recent years. Nevertheless, the sources indicate that the Karluk Turks—who participated in all occurrences from the inception to the dissolution of the state—are widely acknowledged as the founders and primary proprietors of this political entity.[15] For this reason, the emergence period of the Turkic Khaganate is represented by the Karluk Yabghu State (766–840).

The Karluks emerged in historical accounts in 627, inhabiting the area situated east of Lake Balkhash, particularly within the triangle demarcated by Zaysan, Urungu, and Alagöl. Organized as a confederation consisting of three tribes (amounting to a total of nine clans arranged in trios), they engaged in political exchanges with the Göktürks, the Chinese, and the Uyghurs.[16] Following the decrease

[13] Şehrezuri, *Nüzhetü'l-Ervah*, trans Eşref Altaş, Istanbul 2015, p.740.

[14] Considering that Afrāsyāb historically embodies a lineage of the Ashina clan, the ruling dynasty descended from Afrāsyāb identified themselves as "Turk" in their coinage and inscriptions, echoing the custom of the Göktürks. For example, titles such as Türk Hakan Harun Buğra Han, Türk Tuğrul Hakan, and Yağan Türk Tegin are documented in the sources. (Mesûdî I, *Mûrûcü'z-Zeheb ve Meâdinü'l-Cevher*, nşr. M. M. Kumeyhe, I-IV, Dârü'l-Kütübi'l-İlmiyye, Beyrut 1985, s.134). On Afrasyab's relationship with Ashina, or for a comparison between the Gok Turk kings and the kings of the Turkic Khaganate, refer to Ömer Soner Hunkan, *Türk Hakanlığı (Karahanlılar) Kuruluş-Gelişme-Çöküş (766-1212)*, IQ Kültür Sanat Publishing, Istanbul 2011, p.60-64.

[15] In relation to the theories and debates on which Turkic tribe founded the Turkish Khaganate, see Hunkan, op. cit., p. 83–96.

[16] Edouard Chavannes Üç Karluk boylarının Çince isimlerini Meou-lo (Meou-la), Tch'e-se (P'o-fou) ve Ta-che-li şeklinde transkrip etmektedir, bk. *Edouard Chavannes, Documents*

in the prominence of significant regional states in Central Asia after the Battle of Talas in 751 and the erosion of the Türgesh's power, the Karluks founded the Karluk Yabghu State in 766 by seizing control of the former Türgesh centers. Particularly, the cities of Suyâb and Taraz—along with the Western Göktürk's former military encampment, Kuz Ordu (Balasagun), situated along the Chu River. By the year 775, under the leadership of Arslan İl Türgig, who held the title of Burguçan, they exploited the ongoing conflicts among the Tibetans, Chinese, and Uighurs to gain dominance over the south-western region of Kashgar. Simultaneously, they engaged in conflicts with the Oghuz, guiding them towards the tribes located in the Lower Syr Darya region.

The territory of the Karluk Yabghu State, which included the capital Kuz Ordu (Balasagun), extended to Kashgar, Yarkand, and Taraz by the 780s. As documented by medieval authors Gerdizî, Mervezî, and Avfî, in concordance with Chinese sources, the Karluk Turks—consisting of three groups of nine tribes—were promoted from the status of yabghu to that of khagan by Bilge Kadır Khan by 840 at the latest. Consequently, as the architects of the nine banner state referred to as the Türk Hakanlığı (Turkic Khaganate), they emerged as representatives of a substantial polity extending from the western Altai region to the tribes of the Upper Syr Darya.[17] Following Bilge Kadır Khan, Bazir Arslan Khan ascended to the throne in Balasagun; however, specific details regarding his reign remain scarce. Oghulchak Kadır Khan, who was subservient to him and governed the western region of the domain, initially established Taraz as his capital and subsequently, after 893, designated Kashgar as his center. In 915, following the deposition of Bazir Arslan Khan, his wife and son, Satuk Tegin, sought refuge in Kashgar under

sur Les Tou-Kiue (Turks) Occidentaux, Petersbourg, 1900, p.78. Pritsak, on the other hand, considers the three Karluk tribes to correspond to the Chigil, Yagma (Bulak) and Tuhsi tribes, refer to Omeljan Pritsak, "Von den Karluk zu den Karachaniden", *ZDMG* (1951), p.27.

17 Edouard Chavannes, *op.cit.,* p.25; Avfî, p.100; Mervezî, *Ebvâbü fi's-Sîn ve't-Türk ve'l-Hind Müntehabatü min Kitâbi Tabâi'i'l-Hayavân*, nşr. V. Minorsky, The Royal Asiatic Society, London 1942, p.19; Sam'ânî, *El-Ensâb*, nşr. M. E. Demec, I-XII, VII, Beyrut 1976, p.13; Karşî, *Mülhakâtü's-Surâh*, pub. V. Barthold, *Turkestan*, I, Petersburg 1898, p.30; Özkan İzgi, *Çin Elçisi Wang Yen-Te'nin Uygur Seyahatnamesi*, TTK Publications, Ankara 1989, p.16; L. N. Gumilöv, *Eski Türkler*, trans. D. A. Batur, Birleşik Publishing, Istanbul 1999, s.29; Hüseyin Salman, *Karluklar*, (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis), Istanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi, Istanbul 1973, p.27; Ahmet Taşağıl, *Çin Kaynaklarına Göre Eski Türk Boyları*, TTK Publications, Ankara 2004, p.62-63; Ahmet Taşağıl, *Gök Türkler*, III, TTK Publications, Ankara 2004, p.57-59; Ahmet Taşağıl, *Gök-Türkler*, II, TTK Publications, Ankara 1999, p.40; Hunkan, *op.cit.*, p.69-80.



the protection of Oghulchak Kadır Khan. In the interim, Abu Nasr Samanid, a Samanid emir who was unable to obtain a role in the domestic disputes of the adjacent Muslim Samanid State, sought refuge in the Artush region of Kashgar, where he appealed to Oghulchak Kadır Khan for protection. The interaction between Satuk Tegin and the Samanid Muslim emir in Artush led to Satuk Tegin's conversion to Islam, adopting the name Abdu'l-Karim, and subsequently, with the assistance of the Mavarannahr warriors, he seized Kashgar from his uncle Oghulchak Kadır Khan in 921 in the name of Islam.[18] Satuk Buğra Khan, bearing the titles Buğra Khan and Kara Khan, endeavored to restore his father's infringed rights and aspired to seize Balasagun (Kuz Ordu), the principal capital of the khanate. Nevertheless, he did not achieve his goal and died in 955 with the titles of gazi and mujahid.[19]

[18] The chronology of Satuk's transition to Islam and his adoption of the designation "Bughra Khan" can be ascertained from the narratives provided by Ibn al-Athīr and Ibn Khaldūn. According to these sources, approximately 309 AH / 921–922 CE, a Turkic leader—referred to by Ibn al-Athīr simply as "Bughra" and by Ibn Khaldūn as "the Turkish king Bughra Khan," both presumed to denote the same individual as Satuk—intervened on behalf of the Samanid ruler against Laylā b. Nuʿmān al-Daylamī, who had progressed as far as the Merv region and held the governorship of Gurgān. Satuk Bughra Khan apprehended Laylā b. Nuʿmān al-Daylamī, an adversary of the Samanids, in a residence situated in an area known as Sekke, where the latter had sought refuge without any means of escape, and subsequently delivered him to the Samanids. In light of this occurrence, it is probable that Satuk b. Bazir had captured Kashgar and adopted the title "Bughra Khan" by at least 921 CE. As per the narrative provided by Qārshī, Satuk's period aligns with the caliphate of al-Muṭīʿ li-llāh (r. 946–974) and the rule of the Samanid emir al-Rashīd ʿAbd al-Malik b. Nūḥ (r. 954–961), seemingly influenced by the tadhkira that posits Satuk Bughra Khan would enter the mortal realm 333 years post-Hijra (i.e., in 944 CE). Qārshī further indicates that Satuk passed away in 955 CE and was succeeded by his son, Mūsā. Nonetheless, these narratives exhibit inherent inconsistencies, especially considering the tadhkira's assertion that Satuk attained the age of 96 while simultaneously indicating that he embraced Islam during his youth. These chronological inconsistencies make it challenging to align the narratives with the timeline of Satuk's political engagements. On the other hand, according to the chronological order of the narrative, Neşri's dating of Satuk Tegin's conversion to Islam to 913 strengthens the view that Kashgar was conquered for Islam in 921 at the latest and the period of his reign (921-955). For extensive information on this subject, see Ömer Soner Hunkan "Abdülkerîm Satuk Buğra Han", *Cumhuriyetin 100. Yılında 100 Türk Büyüğü: Devlet Adamları-1*, IV, Istanbul 2022, p.92-118.

[19] Taberî, *Târîhü'l-Ümem ve'l-Mülûk,* V, Dârü'l-Kütübi'l-ilmiyye, Beyrut 1407, s.607; Nerşahî, *Târîh-i Buhârâ*, 'Tercüme-i Ebû Nasr el-Kubâvî ve Telhîs-i Muhammed b. Zufer', pub. M. Radavî, İntişârât-ı Tûs, Tahran 1363, p.118; İbnü'l-Fakih, *Kitâbü'l-Buldân*, nşr. Y. El-Hâdî, Dârü Âlemi'l-Kütüb, Beyrut 1996, s.642; İbnü'l-Esîr XI, p.81; VIII, p.106-107; Karşî, p.130-132; *Tezkire-i Satuk Buğra Han* [Molla Hâcı, *Buğra Hanlar Tezkiresi*,] pub. Abdurrahim Sabit, *Kaşgar*, Kaşgar Uygur Neşriyatı, 1988, p.68; M. F. Grenard, "Satuk Buğra Han

His successor, Baytaş Arslan Han, seized Balasagun by at least 960 and, holding the title of "Khan of Khans," established political cohesion in the region under the auspices of Islam. In that year, with the assistance of the jurist al-Kelamatî at the khan's court, 200,000 yurts (large tents) converted to Islam.

Medieval Islamic geographers characterized the cities located within the domain of the Turkish Khanate as sites where mosques, madrasas, tekkes, and zawiyas were constructed, thereby indicating the extensive adoption of Islam across the region.[20] Following Baytaş Arslan Han, Arslan Han Ali succeeded to the throne in Balasagun in 998, only to be martyred through incineration. During his rule, his cousin Buğra Han Harun (Hasan) successfully invaded Mavera al-Nahr, the central region of the Samanid state, in 992. Nevertheless, subsequent to experiencing illness and ultimately passing away, the incomplete endeavor was unequivocally finalized by Arslan Han Ali's son, İlig Nasr, between 999 and 1005, culminating in the total disintegration of the Samanid State.[21] The territories of Transoxiana were part of the Türk Hakanlığı, whereas the area of Khorasan was governed by the Ghaznavids. The Ghaznavids impeded the additional growth of the Hakanate. In 1006, the armed forces of the Türk Hakanlığı successfully captured Balkh, Herat, and Nishapur, issuing gold coinage in the name of Hakan Togan Han Ahmed (998–1017), however, they were later driven back. In 1008, guided by the leadership of İlig Nasr and Kadır Han Yûsuf, and subsequently in 1020 by Arslan Han Mansur (1017–1025) along with Kadır Han Yûsuf, the Türk Hakanlığı traversed the Amu Darya River and launched incursions into Ghaznavid territories; nevertheless, on each occasion, they experienced defeat and were compelled to withdraw to the eastern bank of the river. As a result, internal stability experienced a decline. In 1020, Ali Tegin (İlig Ali b. Hasan/Harun) seized control of Bukhara and established a partnership with the Oghuz, subsequently governing the entirety of Transoxiana until 1025. Arslan Han Mansur abdicated, and Togan Han Muhammad (1025–1027) succeeded him. However, Kadır Han Yûsuf, who also claimed the throne, allied with the Ghaznavid Sultan Mahmud to eliminate his brothers Togan Han Muhammad and Ali Tegin.

Menkıbesi ve Tarihi", trans. O. Turan, *Ülkü*, 79 (1939), p.52; Pritsak, *op.cit*, p.292-293; Z. V. Togan, "Karahanlılar", *AÜFEF Araştırma Dergisi*, 13/1 (Erzurum 1985), p.84.

[20] Karşî, p.32; Sem'ânî, X, p.458-459; İbnü'l-Esîr, VIII, p.460.

[21] For a detailed account of Bughra Khan Harun's initial conquest of Transoxiana, as well as Ilig Nasr's definitive conquest of the region and the dissolution of the Samanid state, see Hunkan, *op.cit.*, p.110-137.



The allies converged in proximity to Samarkand in 1025, culminating in an agreement that led to the Ghaznavids removing Ali Tegin from Bukhara and apprehending his Seljuk associate, the leader Arslan Yabgu. In 1027, Togan Han Muhammad was removed from the throne in Balasagun, and Kadır Han Yusuf (1027–1031) succeeded him in power. Subsequently, as a result of the Ghaznavids' tolerance, Ali Tegin re-established his dominance over Mâverâünnehr beginning in 1027, and in 1032, he triumphed over the forces dispatched by Ghaznavid Sultan Mas'ud under the leadership of Khwarazmshah Altuntas at Debusiye (Kutlug Ordu) situated between Bukhara and Samarkand, thereby declaring himself as Tamgaç Buğra Kara Hakan. Nevertheless, following his demise in 1035, his sons encountered difficulties in preserving the rights established by their father.[22] Böri Tegin Tamgaç Han İbrâhîm, son of İlig Nasr, expelled them from Transoxiana and established the Western Turkic Khaganate there, with Samarkand as its capital (1041).[23] In this context, Arslan Han Süleymân, the son of Kadır Han Yûsuf who governed the eastern region of the Khaganate, founded the Eastern Turkic Khaganate by 1043 at the latest.[24] The Eastern Turkic Khaganate (1043–1211) functioned as a boundary barrier between the easternmost areas of the Islamic sphere and the non-Muslim Turkic-Khitay tribes. Consequently, numerous members of the dynasty, such as Arslan Han Süleyman, are often referenced in historical texts with the appellation al-Ghazi (the defender of Islam).

The overarching policy of the Eastern Turkic Khaganate in the region was oriented toward defence against Turkic tribes, including the Yabaku, Çomul, Basmil, and Uğrak. Concurrently, the Khaganate aimed to satisfy its territorial requirements by facilitating the settlement of various groups within the nation, thereby progressively cultivating a tranquil atmosphere conducive to their conversion to Islam. This policy was deemed effective: the nomadic Turkic population, which spent summers in the territories of the Bulgars and winters near Balasagun in approximately 10,000 substantial tents, had embraced Islam and offered 20,000 sheep during that year's Eid al-Adha celebration. The nomadic populations were organized into groups of a thousand tents, distributed throughout different regions of

22 Refer to Ömer Soner Hunkan, "Mâverâünnehr'de Ali Tegin Oğulları: Kutlug Ordu Devleti (1020-1041)", *Ahmed Yesevi Üniversitesi Türk Dünyası Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi BİLİG*, 40 (Ocak 2007), p.35-77.

23 Refer to Ömer Soner Hunkan, "Batı Türk Hakanlığı (Batı Karahanlılar)'nın Kurucusu Meselesi", *TÜ. Edebiyat Fakültesi Dergisi*, V/10 (2015), p.81-96.

24 İbnü'l-Esîr, IX, p.397.

the nation. Moreover, substantial Turkic groups migrating from Tibet were integrated into the nation. Despite these groups' lack of positive response to invitations to embrace Islam, no armed conflict was initiated against them.

To incentivize their conversion, the Khaganate instituted policies that included the provision of support in the form of tents and the allocation of land holdings (iqta').

Arslan Han Süleyman was defeated by his brother Buğra Han Muhammed, the ruler of Taraz and Isfijab, and subsequently incarcerated in 1057. Subsequently, Buğra Han Muhammed was poisoned by his wife, and Arslan Han Süleyman, along with numerous other members of the royal family, met their demise. This resulted in internal disorder and turmoil within the Eastern Khaganate, which the Western Turkic Khaganate exploited by extending its influence eastward to include Balasagun. Ultimately, Tuğrul Kara Khagan Yusuf ibn Süleyman (1062–1080), who governed Balasagun and Kashgar, sustained his authority until 1069. In 1069—or at the latest by 1074—Tamgaç Khan Hasan wrested control of Balasagun, Kashgar, and Hotan from his brother, Tuğrul Kara Khan Yusuf. Subsequently, Hasan's soldiers committed their loyalty to him, compelling his brother to withdraw to the areas of Taraz and Shash after experiencing a loss of military support. Tuğrul Kara Khan Yusuf resided in Taraz until his demise and was succeeded by his son, Tuğrul Tegin Ömer, in 1080. It is probable that Tuğrul Tegin Ömer maintained authority over Taraz until 1089, when it was seized by Tamgaç Khan Hasan ibn Süleyman. The rule of Tamgaç Khan Hasan (1069–1103) is characterized more by progress in science and civilization than by engagement in political endeavors. Nevertheless, from 1089 onwards, the Khaganate became subject to the suzerainty of the Seljuks. Hasan's son, Arslan Han Ahmed, was required to engage with the Kara Khitans, whom he successfully defeated in 1128. His successor, Khan Ibrahim, was unable to assert control over the Kangly and Karluk tribes and consequently sought assistance from the Kara Khitans. In 1130, Yeh-lü Ta-shih of the Kara Khitans entered Balasagun without opposition and annexed the territories of the Eastern Turkic Khaganate. Yeh-lü Ta-shih subsequently stripped Khan Ibrahim—a descendant of Afrasiab—of his title "Khan" and relegated him to the subordinate rank of "Ilig-i Türkmen." Furthermore, in 1130, Yeh-lü Ta-shih assumed the title "Gür Khan," which translates to "Khan of Khans," in Balasagun. Consequently, the Eastern Turkic Khaganate, which had served as a protective barrier against nomadic tribes east of the Islamic sphere, was withdrawn from Seljuk



protection and subjected to Kara Khitan dominance. Faced with conflicts against the Khwarezmshahs in the west and against Nayman Güçlük, one of their emirs, in the east, Gür Khan endeavored to reaffirm his authority by bestowing robes and gifts upon Güçlük, thereby enhancing his status. Nevertheless, Güçlük remained dissatisfied with this outcome and successfully apprehended Gür Khan, subsequently dethroning him in 1211. Güçlük Khan transitioned from Christianity to Buddhism to marry the daughter of Gür Khan and acquired the title of "Khan," effectively concluding the Kara Khitan dynasty. Subsequently, Güçlük Khan dispatched Arslan Han Ebu'l-Feth Muhammad, whom he had saved from Gür Khan's captivity, to Kashgar. Nevertheless, prior to his arrival in the city, he was assassinated by the elite members of Kashgar. With the demise of the final representative of the dynasty, the Eastern Turkic Khaganate likewise concluded in 1211.[25] Tamgaç Han İbrâhîm (1041–1068), the initiator of the Western Turkic Khaganate (1041–1212), strategically utilized the instability of the east while establishing Samarkand as its capital, successfully extending the state's territory eastward to Balasagun by the end of his life. Nevertheless, during the rule of his son, Khagan Shams al-Mulk Nasr (1068–1080), the Khaganate was required to engage with the Seljuks. Due to persistent tensions between the bureaucrat-ulema class and the governing dynasty, certain regions in the eastern areas of the Khaganate were once more forfeited. His brother, Tamgaç Han Khizr, likewise sought to obstruct the Seljuks' entry into Mawarannahr. Nonetheless, his son Han Ahmed, who reigned from 1087 to 1089 and subsequently from 1092 to 1095, seized the assets of the bureaucrat-ulema class that resisted his rule. Melikshah, the Seljuk sovereign, responded to the requests for assistance from this group by mobilizing a significant army into Mawarannahr, initially seizing Bukhara and subsequently the capital of the Western Turkic Khaganate, Samarkand. Han Ahmed was apprehended and transported to Isfahan. Consequently, the Western Turkic Khaganate fell under the dominance of the Seljuk Empire. Nevertheless, Melikshah, lacking the capacity to sustain stability in the area, restored Han Ahmed to his position on the throne. In this instance, Han Ahmed encountered a coup endorsed by the bureaucrat-ulema class and, while engaged in a military campaign, was apprehended by his own troops, subjected to a trial, charged with heresy, and ultimately condemned to death.

In the post-revolutionary period, the Western Turkic Khaganate fell under the dual influence of the Seljuks and the Eastern Turkic Khaganate. It is probable that

[25] Hunkan, *op.cit*., p.372-391.

Kadır Han Jibril negotiated a consensus with the religious scholars of Transoxiana. Nonetheless, he failed to acknowledge Seljuk sovereignty and, fuelled by escalating ambitions, initiated conflict with the Seljuks with the intention of capturing Khorasan. He was ultimately apprehended and executed by the Seljuk Sultan Sanjar in May 1102. Subsequently, the Seljuks established Arslan Han Muhammad b. Suleyman (1102–1130), who was both Sanjar's father-in-law and nephew, on the throne in Samarkand.

In Bukhara, the leadership of the Hanafi school was conferred upon the Âl-i Burhân family, which originated from Merv and sustained institutional autonomy from 1102 to 1220. Nevertheless, Arslan Han Muhammad encountered challenges with the ongoing problematic bureaucrat-ulema class as well as with the Karluks, who had aligned themselves with the ranks of the dissatisfied.

In 1130, Sultan Sanjar traversed the Oxus River (Amu Darya) accompanied by his forces. Upon arriving in Samarkand, the Karluks retreated in advance of his presence. Following the capture of the city, Sultan Sanjar imprisoned Arslan Khan Muhammad, who suffered from paralysis, and dispatched him to Balkh. Arslan Khan Muhammad subsequently died in Balkh, and his remains were transported to Merv for burial in the madrasa he had commissioned prior to his death (1130). The Karluk conflict that arose within the Western Turkic Khaganate, along with the ensuing Battle of Qatwan, resulted in the region's subjugation under the Qara Khitai (1141). The Qara Khitai levied a tax of one dinar per household; however, they generally avoided further intervention. Nonetheless, the Karluks successfully drove out their perennial adversaries, the Oghuz Turks, from the region of Transoxiana. Following the exit of Khagan Mahmud from the area, his successor, Tamghach Khan Ibrahim b. Muhammad, met his demise near Bukhara in Kallabad, with his remains left in the desert (February 1156). He was succeeded by Tamghach Khan Mahmud b. Husayn b. Hasan (r. 1157–1158), yet scant information is available regarding his interactions with the Karluks. During the rule of Chaghri Khan 'Ali b. Hasan (1158–1160), the Western Turkic Khaganate re-established a decisive dominance over the Karluks. The Qara Khitai sovereign, Gur Khan, directed Chaghri Khan 'Ali—his subordinate in Transoxiana—to remove the Karluks from Bukhara, Samarkand, and their associated territories.

During the rule of Kilij Tamghach Khan Ibrahim, the Khwarazmshah Tekish successfully seized Bukhara with minimal challenge, encountering only the opposition of a minor group, and subsequently returned to Khwarazm. The Khwarazmshahs'



dominion over Bukhara was not perpetual. During his lifetime, Tamghach Khan Ibrahim relinquished the throne to his son, Kilij Arslan Khan Osman (1203), subsequently retiring to seclusion in Bukhara, where he died in 1204. Known for his striking appearance and often referred to as "Yusuf-i Sani" (the Second Joseph), Sultan al-Salatin Kilij Arslan Khan Osman endeavoured to maintain the stability of his state by implementing a policy of equilibrium between the Khwarazmshahs and the Qara Khitai. Supported by the Qara Khitai, Kilij Arslan Khan Osman orchestrated the apprehension and detention of the Khwarazmshah's affiliates in Samarkand, while also confining the Khwarazmshah's daughter, Khan Sultan, within the city's fortress. In reaction, the Khwarazmshah incarcerated Ötegin, the sibling of Kilij Arslan Khan Osman, who had been detained as a hostage in Khwarazm. He subsequently advanced toward Samarkand accompanied by a substantial military force. Recognizing his inability to oppose the forces of Khwarazmshah Muhammad, Kilij Arslan Khan Osman presented himself to the Khwarazmshah with a sword and a burial shroud, following the capture of Samarkand by the Khwarazmshah. While Khwarazmshah Muhammad initially lacked the intention to execute him, he ultimately took the life of Kilij Arslan Khan Osman at the urging of his daughter, Khan Sultan. Numerous individuals of royal descent were likewise executed in conjunction with him. Samarkand was designated as the new capital of the Khwarazmians, consequently leading to the conclusion of the Western Turkic Khaganate in 1212.[26]

State Administration in the Turkic Khaganate

Hierarchy Among the Khagan and Members of the Dynasty

According to Kāshgharī Maḥmūd, Afrāsiyāb, from whom the ruling lineage asserted its ancestry, possessed the title "ḫāḳān" (khaqan), while his offspring were designated as "ḫān" (khan), suggesting that the khaqan occupied the apex of the administrative structure. The terms "khaqan" and "khan" were frequently employed interchangeably, lacking a rigid distinction, to indicate an equivalent status. Throughout the nation, the khaqan was acknowledged as the ultimate central authority, functioning as the sovereign (metbu). The primary capital in which the khaqan was located was known as the "ordu." The formal designation of the capital Balasaghun in administrative documentation was "Kuz Ordu." The term "Kuz,"

[26] Hunkan, *ibid*., p.257-315.

which translates to "north," was employed to denote "great capital," owing to the pre-eminence of the colour "black" as a symbol of sovereignty. Another significant center, Kashghar, was referred to as "Ordu Kend." In response to competing claims to the throne or to establish geopolitical rights through propaganda, the khaqan could append attributes such as "kara" (great), "arslan" (lion), "toghān" (falcon), "tamghach" (great), "qadir" (mighty), "kılıç" (resolute), "bilge" (wise), and "uluğ" (grand) to the titles of khaqan and khan.

The nation, inclusive of its central administration, was administratively partitioned among individuals of the governing dynasty. Subsequent to the khaqan, each dynastic member administered his respective city, province, or region in alignment with his hierarchical status, utilizing the title of tābiʿ (subordinate) or, one level beneath, alt tābiʿ (subordinate of a subordinate).

Nevertheless, during periods of political upheaval or instability, it was feasible for a dynastic member from the lowest rank to ascend rapidly to the apex of the hierarchy. Prominent dynastic figures possessing subordinate roles, such as buğra, ilig, or qādir, held significant autonomy in relation to the khaqan, whom they acknowledged as their sovereign (metbuʿ). In their individual regions, they maintained administrative structures and military capabilities akin to those of the central government. They were capable of establishing direct relations with adjacent states and possessed the authority to engage in warfare or negotiate treaties. Their principal responsibilities to the khaqan included the recitation of his name in the khuṭba (Friday sermon) and on their currency, abstaining from the recognition of any other ruler; the mobilization of the khaqan's army when summoned to combat a mutual adversary; and the remittance of taxes due to the central authority. The individuals most prominently represented within the ruling family were the tegins. Originally, the term tegin denoted "slave," and as per tradition, when the khaqan's offspring presented themselves before their father, they would express their reverence by stating "your slave (tegin) has behaved in this manner," which subsequently resulted in the term evolving into a title for them. Consequently, to differentiate them from conventional slaves, the tegins were designated names reflective of their characteristics, disposition, or hierarchical status—for example, one characterized by a pure nature akin to silver might be referred to as Gümüş Tegin (Silver Tegin), while a courageous individual might be named Alp Tegin. Additional examples include Çağrı Tegin and Köç Tegin, or, if deemed auspicious, Kutluğ Tegin, among others.



The spouse of the khaqan held the designation of qatun (hatun). Within the palace, the qatun held the most significant influence subsequent to the khaqan. Joining her service and operating under her direction was regarded as exceptionally prestigious. Positioned immediately beneath the qatun were her daughters, referred to as katun kunçuy, who held the title of kunçuy. The overarching designation for all women of dynastic lineage, irrespective of age, was tarım. Within the group, the seasoned and aged individuals were designated as altun tarım. If the khaqan possessed consorts in addition to the qatun, these women, designated by titles such as terken qatun, arslan qatun, khan qatun, and shah qatun, held the position of baş hatun (principal consort) and were mothers of the heir apparent. When central authority diminished or during transitions in governance, should multiple dynastic figures possessing the title of khan appear within the nation, the khaqan or claimant positioned at the apex of power would frequently append the adjective "kara" (great), and less frequently "uluğ" (grand), to his title to differentiate himself as the supreme khan.[27]

The Royal Palace

The palace in which the khaqan governed and dwelled was referred to as karşı. Turkish khaqans were capable of commissioning the construction of numerous palaces to serve as their summer and winter residences (yaylak and kışlak). Within this framework, the palaces in use were occasionally transferred to the scholarly class and transformed into madrasas or ribats; in these instances, the khaqan would commission the construction of a new palace for his own use. Following the khaqan and the vizier, the most significant position within the palace was occupied by the uluğ hâcib (great chamberlain). The hâcib was known as tayangu. Indicating "the individual whom the khaqan relies upon" or has confidence in within the palace, the term tayangu diminished in usage following the increased prevalence of the title hâcib. The bırku (chamberlain), who functioned as the master of ceremonies or curtain-keeper, was primarily responsible for overseeing the interactions between the sovereign and their subjects, as well as accommodating foreign ambassadors.

Following the position of uluğ hâcib, the office of kapucubaşı was established. He was tasked with the recruitment of personnel for various roles within

[27] Ömer Soner Hunkan, "İlk Müslüman Türk Devletlerinde Devlet Teşkilatı ve Kültür Hayatı [Türk Hakanlığı (Karahanlılar), Gazneliler ve İdil Bulgar İlteberliği]", *Türk Tarihi ve Kültürü*, ed. M. Bilal Çelik, Nobel Publications, Ankara 2019, p.265-267.

the palace, the introduction of palace staff to the court, the supervision of their appointments and advancements, and the assurance that palace duties were executed in compliance with established protocols. The official responsible for the security of the palace was the candar. These guards, referred to as yatgak, were additionally tasked with ensuring the protection of the khaqan. The silahdars were responsible for the khaqan's weaponry and oversaw the operation of the armory within the palace. The alemdars, also referred to as alem başlar er, were individuals tasked with the responsibility of carrying and safeguarding the khaqan's red-hued flags and standards. There existed within the palace a cadre of tuğcıs, whose responsibility entailed the transport of the khaqan's tuğs (standards) adorned with nine horsehairs (dokuz tuğlu).

An integral component of the palace was its kitchen. The responsibilities of the aşçıbaşı or aşbaşçı hansâlâr encompassed the oversight of utensils and table arrangements. It was his duty to oversee the khaqan's dining arrangements and the kitchen within the palace. He was supported by assistants known as işçi (workers), who aided in ensuring the timely preparation and proper serving of meals. Subsequent to the aşçıbaşı, the most significant position was that of idişçibaşılık (head cupbearer). In Turkish, "idiş" translates to "goblet" or "cup." His primary responsibility involved managing beverages and refreshments at banquets hosted by the khaqan. The palace's ilbaşı was in charge of overseeing the palace stables. Those who sewed and preserved the khaqan's clothes in the *câmehâne* were called *câmedar*. In addition to these officials, there were mattress attendants, bird keepers, stablemen, archers, and bow-makers serving in the palace under the command of the *kapucubaşı*.[28]

Central Administration

The chief administrator and bureaucrat was the vizier, referred to as yuğruş. The individual designated as yuğruş received, in alignment with his role, a title, a tuğ (standard), a drum, armour, a robe of honour, an embellished saddle set, a horse, and the seal of the vizier. His primary responsibilities may be encapsulated as administering the nation in accordance with legal and normative standards, disseminating the khaqan's reputation through virtuous conduct by preserving a tranquil

[28] Hunkan, op.cit., p.267-268; Reşat Genç, *Karahanlı Devlet Teşkilatı*, KB Publications, Istanbul 1981, p.193-233.



environment, ensuring the financial solvency of the treasury, and augmenting the territorial boundaries. Subordinate to the vizier in the hierarchical structure were tribal beys bearing the titles yafgu, tüskğin, inal, and tarhan, who functioned in a manner akin to advisors to the khaqan. It is evident that the administrative framework of the Turkish Khaqanate possessed counterparts or analogues in the central and regional institutions of its contemporaries, including the Samanids, Ghaznavids, Seljuks, and Khwarazmshahs. In interactions with these states and within the associated sources, analogous terminology is employed when describing the administrative framework of the khaqanate. In this context, there was a meclis-i âlî (supreme council) led by the khaqan or the vizier, along with subordinate councils chaired by members of this Divan (Dîvân-ı Tuğra ve İnşâ, Dîvân-ı İstifâ, Dîvân-ı İşrâf, and Dîvân-ı Ârız), although limited information is available regarding their operations.

The composition of the khaqan's decrees and letters, referred to as yarlığ, the application of his tamga (seal) or tuğra (monogram), and the management of correspondence related to both the state's internal and external matters were the responsibilities of the Dîvân-ı Tuğra ve İnşâ. The individuals entrusted with these responsibilities were scribes designated as ılımga or bitikçi, along with seal-bearers referred to as tamgacı. The chief of the Dîvân-ı İnşâ was known as bitigçi ılımga. The treasurer responsible for overseeing the treasury and financial matters was designated as agıçı, while the tax collector was known as ımga. With respect to judicial affairs (dadbeglik), the khaqan possessed the authority to preside over mezâlim courts—special tribunals for grievances—accompanied by judges (kadı) and scholars (âlim) at his discretion. In Samarkand, the capital of the Western Turkic Khaqanate, a Kâdılkudât (chief judge) was in place.[29]

Provincial Administration

The provincial regions (taşra vilayetleri) were administratively assigned to first-degree relatives of the royal family under the designation of tâbî. Individuals of subordinate status within the dynasty governed under the designation alt tâbî. In Islamic texts, the terms tâbî and alt tâbî are translated as nâib or governor (vâlî)—titles used to denote individuals who governed in the name of the khaqan. Prior to the latter part of the 11th century, dihkans (landowning nobles),

[29] Hunkan, *op.cit*., p.268; Genç, *op.cit.*, p.234-268.

high-ranking military officers, and members of the religious elite were eligible for appointment as naib or vali. The şıhne, entrusted with the maintenance of security and order within the city, along with other şıhnes designated for oversight of nomadic groups, constituted essential elements of the provincial administration. A city chief (şehir reisi) governed the relationships between the state and its citizens. Among the retinue of governors and regional leaders, individuals bearing the title kethüda were in attendance; however, it is still a matter of scholarly discussion whether they functioned as local viziers or as officials connected to the central government. The existence of provincial officials such as vali, naib, şehir reisi, şehir kadısı, khatib, and muhtasib also suggests the presence of local councils or city divans. Fortresses were overseen by mustahfız, the commanders of the fortifications. Individuals responsible for mounted postal services were referred to as eşkinci, while messengers conveying information to village chiefs were designated as çalığ. Tribal chieftains (boy beyleri), essential components of the provinces, possessed considerable status before the khaqan, predicated on their population size, economic prosperity, and degree of influence.[30]

The Army

In the Turkish of the Turkic Khaganate, the term sü, employed in a diverse array of military contexts, was discontinued in the 13th century within the historical-military domain and substituted by terms such as leşker, asker, and çeri. The term ordu (army), which is equivalent to sü in contemporary Turkish, predominantly persisted in the sense of ordugâh (military camp), gradually acquiring a wider range of applications over time. By the 20th century, ordu had completely evolved to symbolize the notion previously signified by sü. The term *sü* underwent a similar transformation in Eastern Turkish as well. In present-day Eastern Turkestan and the Turkic republics of Central Asia, the words *asker* and *koşun* or *goşun* have taken its place. As defined by Mahmud al-Kashgari, "er" denotes "man" or "male person," with "eren" serving as its irregular plural, although it is also employed in the singular form.

While the term has various interpretations, within the scope of this discourse, it often occurs in two principal sources from the Turkic Khaganate era—Kutadgu Bilig and Dīwān Lughāt al-Turk—with the connotations of "soldier" and "courageous

[30] Hunkan, *op.cit*., p.269; Genç, *op.cit.*, p.269-281.



individual," reflecting the historical view of military service as a responsibility associated with masculinity. In contrast to the term sü, the forms er and its plural eren persisted in both Western and Eastern Turkic across the subsequent centuries. Notwithstanding the prevalent employment of terms such as leşker, nöker, and asker in Seljuk and Mongol texts, the term er is frequently noted in early Western Turkic documents and classical Ottoman histories. Although it experienced a decline in prominence during the concluding phases of the Ottoman Empire—surpassed by the term nefer—it re-emerged into widespread usage during the language reforms instigated by Atatürk as part of a broader initiative to revitalize Turkic terminology. The term er at can signify either a "heroic name" (er adı) conferred upon a young male at the onset of manhood following a courageous act, thereby replacing his birth name, or—alternatively—it may refer to a cavalryman, as evidenced by the symbolic combination of "soldier (man) and horse." Nevertheless, the commonly held perspective is that the term signifies "soldier," as demonstrated by its recurrent presence in expressions such as "er at birle begler küçi belgürer / er at birle begler tügünler yörer" ("The strength and might of the beys are acknowledged through their soldiers / Beys address challenging issues with their soldiers") in the Kutadgu Bilig. In its plural form, eren denotes soldiers, an army, or a military formation. Nevertheless, the term er at may also denote "servant (gulām)" in specific contexts, as evidenced by the phrase "kapuğdakı er at birle negü teg tirilgüsin ayur" ("He describes the manner in which to address the servants at the gate") from the same text. In contemporary Turkish, the term er at (standardized as erat) has sometimes been incorrectly perceived as a Turkish word with an Arabic plural suffix—analogous to instances such as gidiş/gidişat—however, this understanding has not achieved broad acceptance, as er at is currently acknowledged as a pre-Islamic Turkic compound.

The terms çerig or çeri commonly occur in Turkic-language sources from the period of the Turkic Khaganate and its successor Turkic states, signifying "soldier," "military unit," or "army." Indeed, Yusuf Khass Hajib emphasizes the military significance of the çeri in his verse: "er at boldı begler kanatı yügi / kanatsız kuş uçmaz ay begler begi" ("Soldiers are the wings of the beys, analogous to feathers; / O, bey of beys, a bird cannot soar without its wings"). The notion of çeri, also present in early Turkic sources from the Beyliks and Ottoman eras, was formalized in the 15th-century Ottoman Empire through the term Yeniçeri ("Janissary"), which denoted soldiers enlisted via the devşirme or gulām system. Mahmud al-Kashgari describes the term tokuş (or tokış) as a noun denoting "battle" in

Chaghatai and as a synonym for savaş ("war") in Oghuz Turkish. It also serves as a verb, exemplified by "Begler tokuştı" ("The beys engaged in combat, clashed"). The term uruş conveys the sense of "combat" or "to engage in battle," and it is akin to tokışmak, as evidenced in expressions such as "alpler birle uruşma / begler birle turuşma" ("to fight with heroes / to confront beys"). The term also manifests in poetic frameworks such as: "eren alpı okuştılar / kınğır közün bakıştılar / kamuğ tolumun tokuştılar / kılıç kınka küçün sığdı" ("the valiant men invoked the hero / they cast furtive glances / they engaged with diverse weaponry / the swords scarcely accommodated in their sheaths"), thereby underscoring the dual physical and symbolic vigour of combat.

Mahmud al-Kashgari documents the Turkic equivalent of "weapon" as tolum, the term for "armed man" as tolumluğ er or merely tolumluğ, and the verb "to arm oneself" as tolumlandı or tolumlanur. In Kutadgu Bilig, both forms are commonly employed within military settings; for instance: "özinge bir at ton tolum kodsa tap / çavıksa ajunda atın yadsa tab" ("It is adequate for an individual to sequester a horse, attire, and arms for his use / and if he exhibits swiftness, he attains honor and reputation globally"). In addition to tolum, the term kur also carries the connotation of "weapon." Stemming from this Old Turkic noun, the term korçı, which signifies "armed individual," is present in subsequent medieval sources. In analyzing the military of the Turkic Khaganate (766–1212), it is imperative to acknowledge that the Khaganate embodies both a perpetuation of the pre-Islamic Turkic heritage and a transitional stage leading into the Islamic era, thereby signifying a pivotal period of transformation in Turkic history. Consequently, the military framework of the Khaganate comprised two primary elements: the Khagan's Army (Han Süsi) and the People's Army (Kara Kamag Süsi). The Khagan's Army consisted of the royal guards, elite soldiers (gulāms), and the forces of the Khagan's sons and relatives who possessed tâbî or alt tâbî status, all linked to the central authority through a hierarchical structure. The People's Army (Kara Kamag Süsi) represented the forces of tribal leaders—who held diverse ranks and social positions subordinate to the Khagan—along with the troops of subordinate local governors and specific regional military classes. In the palace of the Turkic Khaganate, *gulāms*—referred to by terms such as *tapugçı*, *kul*, *er at*, and *oğlan*—were generally recruited as young children. The *gulām* system, which existed among pre-Islamic Turks, functioned as a form of "adopted/levy sons' army." While adults were occasionally taken into service, this was not common practice. Such cases likely involved the absorption of defeated enemy soldiers or the state's confiscation of the household slaves of



fallen elites. Within the Turkic Khaganate, a variety of methods were employed to acquire gulāms. A prevalent approach involved the sale or adoption of children. A child integrated into adoptive services was designated as tutunçu, whereas a child officially adopted as a son was known as yufga. Mahmud al-Kashgari asserts: "Bu oglanığı bir toruğka aldım" ("I acquired this slave in a manner akin to purchasing a horse"). According to Mahmud al-Kashgari and Yusuf Khass Hajib, the military trajectory or hierarchical positions that a gulām could progress through within the Turkic Khaganate were, in increasing order: 1. Öge (e.g., kutluk öge, sevinç öge, kılıç öge, bars öge, tonga öge, aka öge); 2. Tegin (e.g., kutluk tegin, sebük tegin, gümüş tegin, köç tegin, alp tegin, kara tegin); 3. Tegin bey (e.g., inanç bey, çavlı bey, çağrı bey, tegin han); 4. Haylbaşı; 5. Sübaşı; 6. Kök ayuk (also referred to as ayguçı); and 7. Er öge or Öge er. Within the palace structure, gulāms were capable of attaining high-level administrative positions such as vizier, chief gatekeeper (kapucubaşı), or chamberlain (hācib, also known as bırku or tayangu). Gulāms in the categories referred to as turgak and yatgak were chiefly responsible for protecting the Khagan and maintaining the security of the palace. The turgaks performed their duties during the daylight hours, whereas the yatgaks were responsible for nighttime service. Given that the Mongol khan was protected by seventy daytime sentries (turgavut) and eighty night-time sentries (kebtevur), it is reasonable to infer that the Turkic Khaganate utilized a comparable number of guards. As per Yusuf Khass Hajib, a distinguished palace official, the kapucubaşı was expected to maintain his presence alongside the turgak during the day and the yatgak throughout the night. He was required to dine with them and fulfill guard responsibilities during the night. In the evening, prior to retiring, he was required to delegate the yatgaks to their respective positions, and in the morning, he had to reassume his station at the entrance of the palace, ensuring that the turgaks were correctly positioned. As per Kashgari, the yatgak served as the guardian of both the Khagan and the nation. The tutgak, in contrast, referred to the mounted unit deployed during nighttime to apprehend enemy scouts and advance forces.

According to Kāshgharī, individuals who accompanied the khagan during times of war or travel were referred to as "yortuğ," a term that directly aligns with the notion of an imperial guard or elite army (ḫassa). Within the Western Turkic Khaganate, it is reported that Arslan Khan Muhammad (r. 1102–1130) had an army of twelve thousand Turkic slave-soldiers. This figure was commonly regarded as adequate and justifiable for imperial guard units in Central Asian Turkic states as well as Turkic-Islamic entities. As Yūsuf Khāṣ Ḥājib observes: "A large number

of individuals is superfluous; the military should consist of carefully chosen combatants." Just as the selection of soldiers requires diligence, so too must the provision of their weaponry be comprehensive. An excessive number of troops results in a force devoid of leadership; similarly, an army without leaders lacks bravery. A veteran military strategist once evaluated and determined that a contingent of twelve thousand soldiers represents a formidable force. A courageous individual known for his military victories asserted, "For me, a force of four thousand soldiers constitutes a comprehensive army." For example, in the Battle of Balkh against the Ghaznavids, Ilig Nasr strategically deployed his elite slave-soldiers (ḫavāss al-ghilmān) and distinguished cavalrymen at the core of his army. Moreover, at the beginning of the conflict, he mobilized approximately a thousand mounted Turkic ghulāms and positioned them in the vanguard to engage in archery. The designation "Sons of the Khagan" (Arabic: Banī al-Ḫāqān or Abnāʾ al-Ḫaqāniyya) is referenced in Islamic texts, whereas the term al-Turk al-Ḫāqāniyya is employed more generally to denote the entirety of the Khaganate's population. In times of conflict with other nations or significant assaults on the realm, it was customary for the sons of the khagan to call upon each other for aid. Within the hierarchical framework of the Khaganate, organized as metbūʿ (suzerain), tābiʿ (vassal), and alt-tābiʿ (subordinate vassal), the metbūʿ, or supreme khagan, was referred to as al-Ḫāqān al-Kabīr, Khān-i Buzurg, Kara Khagan, or Uluğ Khagan. The khagan's brothers and uncles were designated as tābiʿ, while their sons were termed alt-tābiʿ. When the khagan's sons sought assistance, these vassals would respond with their provincial forces.

For instance, Ilig Nasr embarked on a mission to engage with Ghaznavid Sultan Maḥmūd and issued a call to all khagan sons, including those residing in the most remote regions of the kingdom. When Ilig Nasr ambitiously traversed the Oxus River with a force exceeding fifty thousand, one of the individuals who responded was his relative, Qadir Khan Yūsuf, often known as the "King of Khotan." Ilig Nasr positioned Qadir Khan and the Khotanese Turks on the army's right flank, amidst an array of shields and spears evocative of dense reed thickets. The fundamental components of the Turkic Khaganate's army comprised the Karluks, Chigils, Ezhgish, Tuhsis, and subsequently migrating tribes such as the Yaghmas and Yabakus. These Turkic tribes constituted the principal military resource and strength of the Khaganate. Their tribal leaders held significant positions within the administrative and military structure, ranking immediately below the khagan. During wartime, they enlisted in the forces of the khagan under the command of



their respective beys. During the referenced campaign, a general mobilization of all Turkic tribes was announced. In addition to the primary tribes, specific Oghuz tribes—despite not being initial constituents of the Khaganate—continued to maintain political subordination (tābiʿ) and participate in both internal and external matters until the latter half of the 12th century, often in exchange for land grants (iqṭāʿ) or financial compensation. Muslim Turkic tribes engaged in religious conflicts and were designated as ghāzīs. These ghāzīs of Māwarāʾ al-Nahr, or Ghazīs of Transoxiana, ought not to be perceived solely as a collective of volunteer combatants, but rather as a structured institution characterized by leadership and governmental acknowledgment. For example, al-Nasafī references in his work al-Kand several individuals holding the designation "Commander of the Army of the Ghāzīs in Samarqand" (Ṣāḥib Jayš al-Ghuzāt bi-Samarqand), including Zebrek al-Aʿraj (d. 862), Saʿīd ibn Sāʿd al-Shāshī (d. 908), and Abū Jaʿfar ibn Abī Tamām al-Hayyāj. During the Turkic Khaganate era, evidence indicates the existence of a comparable framework, with rulers such as Satuq Buğra Khan al-Ghāzī, Tughān Khan Aḥmad al-Ghāzī, Bekech Arslan Tegin Aḥmad al-Ghāzī, Arslan Khan Muhammad al-Ghāzī, and Arslan Khan Sulaymān al-Ghāzī all employing these Transoxianan ghāzīs. The term dihqān—originating from the Persian word dih (village) and the relational suffix -gān, and subsequently incorporated into Arabic as dihqān—denotes a village chief or a member of the landed aristocracy. In the societies of Māwarāʾ al-Nahr and Khurāsān, the dihqāns constituted a segment of the upper social and economic hierarchies, while also enjoying political privileges. They actively engaged in the Turkic Khaganate and, with their own forces, took part in Ilig Nasr's campaigns against the Ghaznavids. Nevertheless, under the Western Turkic Khaganate, their political privileges were abolished and the institution was dismantled. The Turkic Khaganate further accommodated migrating Turkic-Mongolic tribes within its territories, thereby promoting their Islamization while leveraging their military strengths. According to Ottoman historian Müneccimbaşı, these tribes were extant within the Khaganate well before the departure of Yeh-lü Ta-shih (Gür Khan of the Kara Khitans) from China. Müneccimbaşı categorizes them under the collective designation of "Turks." He indicates that Muhammad Arslan Khan established sixteen thousand tents of these Turks in the regions situated between China and his own territories to mitigate Chinese invasions into Turkestan. He tasked them with the administration of specific estates and conferred tīmārs (land grants) in exchange for their military service. The term Şıhne (Şahne) traditionally refers to "burden, provisions, animosity, equine herd, consignment,

or expulsion." Beginning in the late 9th century, the term denoted a commander tasked with the security and maintenance of public order within a city or region. For instance, upon the capture of Bukhara and the dissolution of the Samanid state by the Western Khaganate's ruler, Ilig Nasr b. Ali, he initially designated Tegin Khan to govern Samarkand and another individual—presumably his brother Ja'far Tegin or a relative named Subashi Tegin—as the Şıhne of Bukhara. During this time, he dwelled in Özkend, located in the region of Fergana. The Şıhne of Bukhara diligently observed Muntasir, who aimed to reestablish the Samanid state in the area. In the Turkic Khaganate, the khagan's encampment was known as "toy," and the phrase "han toy" denoted the site where the khan mobilized his forces. The khan's tent, referred to as "çuvaç" or "kurvı çuvaç," was constructed from silk that demonstrated resistance to heat, rain, and snow, and it exhibited a circular form. Nine khan flags were prominently displayed in front of it, and drums were utilized during combat or ceremonial occasions. The khan appointed specific officers known as "çuvaçı" tasked with the responsibility of erecting his tent, dismantling it, and dispersing the army following engagements. In establishing headquarters, a safeguarded location characterized by ample vegetation and water sources was meticulously selected. The lines and formations of confronting forces in combat were referred to as "çerik," which gave rise to the proverb, "alp çerikte bilge tirikte" (a courageous individual is evaluated within battle formations, while a prudent person is assessed in council). Comprehensive narratives of conflicts in the sources regarding the Turkic Khaganate indicate that the military employed a "hâmis" or fivefold formation. The khan and his elite forces constituted the central formation (referred to as "kalp" or "heart" in Islamic texts), while the units led by the khan's sons symbolized the "meymene" (right wing) and "meysere" (left wing). Yusuf Has Hajib advocated for the strategic positioning of reliable soldiers at the front and rear—specifically, pioneer and rear units—which he recognized as distinct military formations. The advance units, known as "yezek" or "yizek" in Turkish, are referenced in Islamic literature as "talia" and "mukaddem," whereas the rear units are termed "çeri ardı" and "saka." The "çavuş" was tasked with upholding formation and averting military misconduct in times of peace. Soldiers who successfully penetrated enemy lines were referred to as "tapulgan (iron) er" and "sökmen." The title Sipâhsâlâr, originating from the Persian terms "sipâh" (army) and "sâlâr" (commander), is rendered in Arabic texts as "isfehsâlâr" or "isbehsâlâr," analogous to the Turkish term "sübaşı," which denotes "army commander." One prominent sipâhsâlâr was Konuş, who served as a commander under Ali Tegin.



The Alem Baş Er (Alemdar), as described by Yusuf Has Hajib, was tasked with overseeing the battle flag and military maneuvers, ensuring that no soldier failed to heed an attack command. The term "alem," derived from the Arabic "ilm," signifies "knowledge" and has evolved to represent flags, banners, and standards that symbolize authority. Another Arabic term, "rayet," is equivalent to the Turkish word "batrak" (flag). Kashgari's œuvre encompasses a poem that references the "red flag" and "black soil" associated with Muslim Turkic campaigns. Concerning the İlbaşı, Yusuf Has Hajib delineates it as an official, frequently belonging to the servant class, who was in charge of equine care and functioned as a stable master. Kashgari defines "il" as an element related to horses, affirming that "the horse is the wing of the Turk." The İlbaşı, similar to a stable master, held responsibility for the khan's horses. The Candâr, derived from the Persian terms "cân" (weapon) and "dâr" (holder), constituted elite palace guards chosen from the servile class, entrusted with the protection of the khan and the palace. The term Candâr aligned with the Oghuz phrase "çapıtgan er," which translates to "executioner." Historical documents corroborate the designation of specific individuals as candârs. Kashgari mentions that the names and provisions of soldiers were documented in a ledger known as "ay bitiği," which also included references to the khan's register. Consequently, the military maintained comprehensive records of soldiers' identities and salaries, frequently updating them, particularly following casualties in combat. In medieval Muslim Turkic states, the entity tasked with maintaining military records, managing soldier allotments (ikta and dirlik), and ensuring army provisions was the dîvân-ı arz/ceyş, led by the emîr-i arz or ârız. The phrase "ay" or "ay bitiği" indicates that wages and modifications were conducted on a monthly frequency. [31]

Social Life in the Turkic Khaganate

A significant portion of the knowledge regarding social life in the Turkic Khaganate comes from the renowned text Dīwān Lughāt al-Turk authored by Mahmud al-Kashgari, who was himself a participant in this political entity. While the information exhibits some similarities to urban existence, it predominantly portrays the lives of rural Turks as equestrians, shepherds, or nomadic groups. The individuals,

[31] In relation to the army of the Turkish khaganate refer to Ömer Soner Hunkan, *İpek Yolunun Muhafizları Bozkırlardan Kentlere Türk Hakanlığı Ordusu,* Bilge Kültür Sanat Publications, Istanbul 2019; Genç, *op.cit.*, p.282-336.

tribes, or citizens residing within a province or region, commonly identified as an il (country or district), were traditionally designated as tüz, budun, or buyun. The budun was governed by a legal code, the nom, which derived its legal basis from religious principles. The elders of the budun, referred to as atlıqlar, would assemble at specific locations known as ternek to discuss and resolve matters pertaining to the community. The budun consisted of multiple clans (boy), with each clan being directed by a bey. The regions governed by a bey, referred to as bey ili, were safeguarded from enemy incursions by signal fires erected in watchtowers known as karguy or kargu, which were commonly situated on high ground. In everyday engagements, the initial query presented upon encountering strangers was "Which boy do you belong to?" underscoring the importance of clan affiliation. Clans were established through the integration of several obas (tribal units). An oba or oymak represented a collective of closely interrelated families residing together, establishing the family as the fundamental unit of society.

In the 11th-century Khaganate, a patriarchal familial structure was predominant. Children called their fathers "ata," whereas wives referred to their husbands as "bey" or "beğ." Mothers were referred to as "apa" or "ana." The eldest son was referred to as "tun oğul," the eldest daughter as "tun kız," and the youngest offspring as "aştal oğul."

Siblings were referred to as "karındaş" or "kadaş," with individuals sharing the same father termed "kanğdaş kadeş" and those with the same mother designated as "igdiş kadeş." Step-relations were signified by terms such as "kanğsık" and "baldır" (e.g., kanğsık ata, kanğsık oğul, baldır oğul, baldır kız). Adoption was implemented within the familial structure, with adopted sons referred to as "yufga" or "tutunçu oğul," and adopted daughters designated as "kızlandı." The term "emikdeş" signifies siblinghood, and it probably extends to include milk kinship. While slaves, concubines, and wet nurses were not regarded as blood relatives, they fulfilled crucial functions within family dynamics and cohesion. Enslaved individuals were referred to as "kul" or "tegin," and notwithstanding their gender, the overarching term "karabaş" was extensively employed. Slaves were typically afforded little respect both within familial structures and in broader societal contexts; they were often clad in a sleeveless woolen garment referred to as "çekrek kapa." They could be traded for a specific value or occasionally emancipated by their owners, frequently on celebratory occasions, while the tulip-shaped collars known as "boğsuk" served to deter their escape. Female slaves or concubines were



considered superior to male slaves, and titles such as "kız, kırnak, kaçaç, yalnguk, yinçü, yinçke kız, küng, and as" signified their elevated status. These women were engaged in domestic tasks, wool spinning, and marital rituals, yet primarily focused on entertainment and providing consolation. Affluent families engaged the services of wet nurses and nannies, referred to as "avurta" and "dâye." Marriage, as the cornerstone of kinship, was regarded as the most valued social institution, characterized by intricate customs. The marriage proposal was facilitated by intermediaries referred to as "savçı" (verbal envoy), "yorığçı," "yazığçı" (letter envoy), and "arkuçı" (matchmakers), collectively known as tüngür or dünürcü. Following the establishment of the bride price, referred to as "kalıng," the bride would depart from her parental home, known as the "türkün," accompanied by a wedding ceremony. The "kılınçlı" (esteemed or beloved) bride would journey to the groom's residence on a tahtırevan (palanquin) enveloped by "didek" (veils) to safeguard her appearance from unfamiliar eyes, accompanied by "karabaş" (concubines) and her dowry referred to as "sep." Additionally, gifts termed "kezüt" were offered to the groom's family. Upon her arrival, the bride was assisted in disembarking by a servant concubine, who was subsequently presented to her new proprietor. The hair of the bride and groom was styled at an establishment known as "mendiri." In the bridal chamber, referred to as "münderü," encircled by silk and fabric curtains termed "tülfir," the bride was meticulously prepared for consummation, embellished with a gold and silver necklace known as "bogmak" and crowned with a "didim" (tiara). Kinship terms encompassed "oğuş, yaguk kişi, öz kişi, and uruğ turığ" to refer to relatives. The husband's younger brother was referred to as "ini," while the wife's younger brother was known as "yurç." The term "yezne" was used to denote the brother-in-law, "kükü" denoted the maternal aunt, "tagay" referred to the maternal uncle, "manija" identified the sister-in-law, "çıkan" was used for the paternal aunt's son and nephew, "yenğge" designated the elder brother's wife, "sinğil" denoted the husband's younger sister, "eke" was applied to the elder sister, and "baldız" referred to the wife's sister, with the term "eke" also used for elder sisters. Divorce was permissible in instances of irreconcilable conflict, referred to as "tok tok" between marital partners. To be "boş" signified emancipation. The motives for women seeking separation frequently encompassed the husband's acquisition of an additional wife or the manifestation of abusive language. Women had the option of financially compensating their husbands for a divorce and subsequently becoming widows. Widows were allowed to remarry; however, no additional dowry was mandated.

Within society, the upper class was embodied by the distinguished individuals known as "tüplüğ eren" or "tüplüğ yıldızlığ," specifically the tribal chieftains. Among them, the highest-ranking individual was the "yuğruş," who emerged from the common populace (specifically, the tribal chieftains) yet achieved the status of vizier, placing him just one rank beneath the khagan. He was honored with the presentation of a black silk parasol. A non-Turk, such as a Persian, irrespective of his social standing or retinue, was ineligible to receive this designation. Individuals holding two ranks subordinate to the khagan were designated as "yafgu," a term that the residents of Hotan knew as "çuvı." The third position was occupied by the "tüksin," who also originated from the populace. Another notable position within the hierarchy was that of the "öge" or "öke," individuals situated one rank beneath the khan's lineage tegin, who originated from the general population; they were knowledgeable, aged, and sagacious men who functioned as advisors and counsellors to the khagans. Furthermore, there were titles signifying the rank of tribal chiefs based on the significance of their respective tribes. For instance, the leader of the Çigil tribe was referred to as "tüksin-i Çigil," while the head of the Yağma tribe was designated as "Yağma Tuğ," and the chiefs of the Karluk tribes were known by titles such as "kül erkin" (signifying "mind accumulated like a lake"), "çuğlan," and "sagun." The leaders of the Yabaku tribe held the titles "büke" (dragon) and "budraç." Individuals who traced their lineage maternally from the khagan's line while paternally from the populace were designated as "inal" or "yınal," whereas trusted and dependable chieftains were known as "inanç bey." The quotidian existence of tribal leaders encompassed activities such as hunting, engaging in warfare, governing their constituents, and organizing communal feasts. They were attended by a multitude of servants and kin referred to as "koldaş." Among tribal leaders, the term "el" denoted a condition of peace, while "kurşı" signified conflict or contention.

In times of instability, the most disadvantaged groups in society experienced the greatest adversity due to conflicts among the beys. During periods of conflict, a tribal bey would enlist in the khagan's military alongside his troops. Moreover, his fundamental responsibility involved administering justice within his community, which encompassed the capture and punishment of offenders. An accused individual presented before the bey was adjudicated in the presence of two witnesses referred to as "tanuk." The society utilized an informant system to uncover crimes and apprehend offenders. Offenses that disrupted social order encompassed theft ("uğru"), looting, stabbing, and wounding, among other actions.



Such offenders were mostly sentenced to imprisonment in facilities called "tünek" or "kısığ." Lesser punishments involved beating, binding hands and arms, humiliation, and torture, while the most severe penalty was death administered by an executioner called "çapıtgan er." Bribery, or "orunç," was a common practice in society. Essential to the nomadic lifestyle were the "yazak" pastures, including summer and winter pastures (yaylak and kışlak), where the population was concentrated. Terms like "kend" and "uluş" in regional Turkic dialects could mean both city and village. "Buçgak" referred to a district or township, and "balık" denoted a fortress or city. Leading figures among the people were the wealthy "bay" and the wise "bilge" individuals, with the devout among them called "tenrigen." Physicians were known as "emçi," "otacı," or "atasagun," while shamans or soothsayers were called "kam" or "ırk," who likely practiced dream interpretation and astrology. Poets or bards also appeared in society. While animal husbandry played a significant role, a portion of the population engaged in farming, being called "tarığçı," with hired laborers referred to as "terçi." Merchants involved in trade were named "sart." The village headman, known as "kökyuk," likely acted as a local leader or mayor, assisted by an aide called "çoban." The kökyuk organized communal needs such as water supply and the construction of irrigation channels, imposing fines or confiscating goods from those who disobeyed, a punishment termed "çapta." The poorest among the people were itinerant beggars, called "karaçı," "koldaçı," or "umduçı." Artisans and craftsmen fulfilled essential community needs with professions such as "közek" (weaver), "ayakçı" (maker of pots and pans), "yiçi" (tailor), "etükçi" (shoemaker and bootmaker), "erüklemek" (leather tanner), "üğitçi" (miller), "etmekçi" (baker), "etçi" (butcher), "salçı" (cook), "temürçi" (blacksmith), and "okçu" (arrow maker). Apprentices working under them were called "bala," "buşgut," "tuşgut," "uzmak," and "turbı." Other important occupations of the era included "korıçılar" (guards), "eşkinçiler" (mounted postal couriers), and guides responsible for protecting and transporting valuable silk textiles, known as "ağıçılar," "yorçı," and "çufga."

In daily life, men were primarily occupied with acquiring and increasing wealth within the scope of their profession. Their horses and weapons were also among their most important concerns. True to the proverb, "The horse is the wing of the Turk," horse races, the game of çevgen, archery and bow-drawing contests, wrestling matches, feasts, and evenings filled with music, drinking, and gambling were indispensable pastimes outside of work. Men's clothing was made from silk, cotton, wool, felt, and leather, including items such as hats (börk), furs, turbans,

caftans, jackets, shirts, baggy trousers (şalvar), boots, sandals (çarık), knee guards, and cloaks (kepenek). Their attire was complemented by belts, sashes, cords, handkerchiefs, gloves, and money pouches. Women were referred to as "işler," besides caring for children and household duties, engaged in spinning thread, sifting flour, rolling dough, baking bread and pastries, sewing felt, embroidery, making adornments such as hairpieces from goat hair, and stringing pearls. Their main form of entertainment was dancing and swinging on swings made by tying a rope between two trees or fixed posts. Silk was the primary material for their clothing. They wore shoes, shirts (mintan), and skirts, often covering their heads or braided and henna-stained hair with a thread-embroidered veil. The colours they chose had symbolic meanings: deep red expressed coquettishness, while green signified affection. Women's jewellery included rings, bracelets, pearls, necklaces, earrings, hoops, various beads, a small knife worn on the belt, and capes, often crafted from gold, silver, and precious stones.[32]

Economic Life in the Turkic Khaganate

Subsequent to the capture of Transoxiana and its integration into the Islamic sphere, the circulating currency types—dinar (gold), dirham (silver), and fals (copper)—were likewise adopted by the Khaganate. In this context, the dinar was referred to as "uruğluğ altun," the dirham as "yarmak," and the fals as "benek." The dirham served as the most prevalent currency in the marketplace. As a result, "yarmak" evolved into a generic term equivalent to currency. Among the coins produced during the Khaganate period, the most notable were the "tamgaciyye dirhemleri" or "müeyyidü'l-adliyye dirhemleri," issued during the economically flourishing reign of Tamgaç Khan İbrâhîm (1041–1068). In commercial exchanges and the remuneration of officials' salaries, the valuation of currency was set in accordance with the value of pure gold.

Forty-seven dirhams corresponded in value to one miskal of pure gold. In times of political instability or when there was a scarcity of gold and silver in the market, coins were occasionally produced with a reduced standard through the mixture of gold and silver. In these instances, the amounts of payment were re-evaluated in accordance with the newly established value linked to pure gold. Following

[32] Ömer Soner Hunkan, "İlk Müslüman Türk Devletleri", *Türk Dünyası Kültür Tarihi*, ed. A. Kanlıdere ve İ. Kemaloğlu, Ötüken Publications, Istanbul 2020, p.174-178; Reşat Genç, *Kaşgarlı Mahmud'a Göre XI. Yüzyılda Türk Dünyası*, TKAE, Ankara 1997, p.55-125.



Tamgaç Khan İbrâhîm's acquisition of the Fergana region from the Eastern Turkic Khaganate, he instituted alterations in the format and constituents of the currency. Coins composed of a copper-lead alloy featuring irregular edges were superseded by well-minted copper-silver coins. The public was cognizant that these inferior-grade silver coins included copper and that their valuation was established in relation to pure gold. Economically, the Western Turkic Khaganate persistently maintained its influence over the Eastern Turkic Khaganate. In the Turkic Khaganate, the fundamental components of economic activity included trade, agriculture, animal husbandry, hunting, and mining.

In urban environments, artisans and tradesmen were structured in a manner that reflected their respective roles. Owing to the nation's strategic location along the Silk Road, trade constituted the primary source of revenue. Hotan and Kashgar functioned as frontier trade provinces, obtaining goods from eastern sources, specifically from China and the Uyghur regions. Among the pathways leading to Khwarezm and Khorasan were essential trade centers such as Bukhara; in the southwest, as boundary provinces en route to Tokharistan and further west to Islamic regions, were Termez and Balkh; and in the northwest, Isfijab and Taraz served as vital intersections for trade. Other prominent urban centers known for their dynamic commercial activity included Samarkand, Tashkent, Özkent, Khujand, Yarkand, Beykent, and Balasagun. For instance, merchants traveling from China to Hotan introduced a range of Chinese silks and textiles (distinguished by specific names and considerable diversity, some of which are detailed in Mahmud al-Kashgari's writings), apparel, gold belts, silver ornaments, tea, and various other commodities. Upon their return, they would carry valuable stones (such as jade), mercury, Hu silks, spices produced in substantial quantities, perfumes, horses, camels, saddles and belts embellished with precious stones, and ivory. Cotton and cotton textiles, particularly medicines, were imported from India. A variety of goods, predominantly linen textiles, were imported from Islamic nations, while numerous slaves, animals, hunting equipment, silk, musk, raw and precious metals, and leather rugs were exported to those regions. The "sart" (merchant) would arrive with his merchandise via "arkış" (caravan) and reside as a guest in an individual's residence in the commercial town. Following the sale of his merchandise, he would compensate the host through in-kind contributions or monetary payments for their hospitality, frequently adhering to a predetermined rate, such as one sheep for every twenty sold. In addition to residences, taverns, retail establishments, and ribats functioned as alternative venues where merchants traded their merchandise.

Concurrently with the cultural advancements in the civilized areas, particularly in the nation's western regions, the dissemination of sedentary lifestyles and urban culture resulted in the growth of agricultural practices and arable land. Cereal was referred to as "tarığ," while wheat, in particular, was designated as "aşlık." In addition to wheat, other crops such as barley, millet ("üğür"), rye ("konak"), vetch, sesame ("künçü"), flaxseed ("yitim"), rice ("tuturkan"), and nigella ("sunı") were also grown. Agricultural lands were tilled, enhanced with fertilizer (referred to as "kığlama"), and irrigated employing a range of implements; moreover, during the harvest period, crops were conveyed via horse, camel, mule, or donkey. The cultivation of vegetables and fruits was prevalent, encompassing radishes ("turma"), carrots ("sarığ turma"), pumpkins, onions ("sovan"), garlic ("sarmusak"), cucumbers ("turmuz"), mustard greens ("kıçı"), eggplants ("bütegü"), turnips ("çamgur"), caulifower, and spinach. Fruits including pear, apple, mulberry ("üjme"), quince, walnut ("yagak"), oleaster, peach, apricot, plum, pistachio, hazelnut, pomegranate, and date were also cultivated. One of the most significant agricultural practices was grape cultivation, known as viticulture, with grapes and vineyards designated by the same terminologies employed today.

The primary source of income for the nomadic existence was animal husbandry, with horses regarded as the most valuable and highly esteemed animals. The comprehensive data furnished by Kaşgarlı Mahmud regarding horses unequivocally illustrates the considerable importance of horses in the lives of the Turks. Different breeds of horses were recognized, and each component of the equine anatomy was identified, accompanied by a comprehensive understanding of their grooming, nutrition, healthcare, training, ailments, and mortality. Following horses, sheep ranked as the second most significant animals, cultivated in extensive herds to fulfil the meat demands of Transoxiana and Khorasan. Goats were maintained in mountainous and challenging terrains. Cattle breeding was significantly less prevalent, primarily attributed to the challenges associated with their care during winter and the requirement of constructing barns, which rendered cattle breeding less attractive. Nevertheless, the practice of camel breeding was prevalent due to the essential role camels played in the transportation of goods for nomadic populations, with male camels, referred to as "buğra," being particularly valued. Donkeys, mules, and even elephants, referred to as "yağan" or "yangan," were additionally maintained for transportation purposes. Simultaneously, the cultivation of poultry and apiculture were engaged in as ancillary activities.



Hunting played a crucial role in the economic existence of nomadic peoples, functioning both as a revenue source and an essential method of acquiring sustenance. Collective hunting expeditions were referred to as "drive hunts" or "chase hunts," orchestrated by tribal leaders whose followers would disperse across mountainous and forested regions, directing wild animals toward the chief's location. Hunting implements comprised bows and arrows, along with trained hunting animals, and the utilization of traps was also employed. Animals hunted for meat—such as deer, mountain goats, and birds—were augmented by wild animals captured for their fur, which were marketed as commercial products. Fishing was conducted in Lake Balkhash, Issyk-Kul, rivers, and streams, employing a hooked iron implement known as "argağ" as a fishing line. Extensive fishing was facilitated by the use of cast nets from boats and the utilization of netted wooden barriers constructed from living tree branches to prevent the fish's escape.

The mineral requirements of the nation were primarily fulfilled by the mountainous areas extending from Tashkent and Ilak through the Fergana Valley to Kashgar. This region was abundant in gold, silver, copper, iron, mercury, tin, alum, oil, a variety of soils suitable for glass, ceramics, and brick production, precious stones, woods utilized for carving and inlay applications, along with a diverse array of plants employed for dyeing and medicinal purposes. Gold prospecting in the Jayhun River and the Zerefshan River that traverse the Sogd Valley served as a means of sustenance. These unprocessed materials were transformed in urban centres—each functioning as a trade hub—within a multitude of bazaars, numerous inns, and workshops dedicated to particular crafts, yielding goods for domestic use, labor, ornamentation, and military purposes, with certain products being exported to additional regions and nations.[33]

Education and Science in the Turkic Khaganate

Given that over fifty economically important cities existed in the western region of the Khanate alone that warranted the issuance of coinage, the necessity for education and trained personnel becomes unmistakably apparent. Consequently, it is unsurprising that the inaugural modern-style madrasa recognized in the medieval Islamic sphere was founded by Tamgach Khan Ibrahim in June 1066 in

[33] Hunkan, *op.cit*., p.178-181; Genç, *op.cit.*, p.295-388; Also refer to Dilnoza Duturaeva, *Qarakhanid Roads to China*, Brill, Leiden/Boston 2022.

Samarkand. Furthermore, a prototype that could function as a model for such an educational institution was already present in the ancient religious traditions of the region. The characteristics that rendered the Tamgach Khan Ibrahim Madrasa both contemporary and exceptional included its notable distinctions from preceding educational institutions: It had a designated building, student residences, a library, administrators chosen through selection, a curriculum and courses aligned with a particular school of thought (with mandatory adherence to the Hanafi madhhab), consistently enrolled students, scholarships, paid faculty with salaries indexed to inflation, established funding sources, and a well-defined annual budget. The endowment charter of the madrasa indicates the presence of additional madrasas in Samarkand; however, detailed information regarding their curriculum is currently unavailable. By the 12th century, as a result of the educational program initiated by Tamgach Khan Ibrahim, it is noteworthy that Bukhara alone had six thousand salaried faqihs (Islamic jurists), which exemplifies the extraordinary extent to which education and instruction had advanced in the region.

The principal role of madrasas was to train officials who met the religious requirements of the public—such as imams, muezzins, preachers, and muftis—while also educating bureaucrats tasked with various state responsibilities, including judicial positions like qadis, administrative roles such as muhtesibs and clerks, along with translators, intelligence officers, notaries, envoys, deputies, governors, and viziers. Considering that the state apparatus and social life were governed solely by the authority of Hanafi law and that Hanafi religious scholars influenced all facets of society, the founding and development of madrasas were predominantly motivated by the objective of training bureaucrats and religious officials, rather than being primarily a response to Batini (non-Sunni) movements, as is frequently presumed. This coalition of interests and authority did not permit the proliferation of Rafidi (Shiite) ideologies in the area, nor did it accept alternative Sunni schools such as the Shafi'i without critique, as the advantages and influence obtained over state and society were deemed non-transferable to other legal schools. As a result, Hanafi scholars from Transoxiana were dissuaded from traveling internationally due to concerns about the importation of foreign doctrines, while those who engaged in service within Seljuk or Eastern Turkic territories were subjected to stringent monitoring, frequent trials, and, in some instances, execution upon their return, based on suspicions of heterodox associations. Chronologically, the Tamghaj Khan Ibrahim Madrasa functioned as a model for subsequent madrasas across the Islamic world, distinguished by its unique physical infrastructure and operational

framework. Although the esteemed Nizamiyya madrasas established by Seljuk vizier Nizam al-Mulk in Baghdad in 1067 became prevalent in Iraq and Iran, the madrasas founded by Turkish khans such as Tamghaj Khan Ibrahim were predominantly neglected until recently.

Examples include the "Kul Er Tegin" madrasa constructed in Bukhara by Qadir Khan Jibril and the institutions established by Arslan Khan Muhammad, who transformed his palace in Bukhara into a madrasa and provided it with substantial endowments. These institutions, frequently functioning as burial locations for their founders, exemplify one of the most notable innovations that the Turks imparted to Islamic civilization. Consequently, instead of inducing stagnation, Turkish hegemony in the medieval Islamic-Farsi-Arab realm promoted a dynamic era of intellectual and institutional advancement within Islamic civilization.

The significant emphasis that the Turkic Khaganate accorded to science can be comprehended through its aspiration to rival Iran, India, and China, frequently designated as the "Eastern" or "Turan Country." Sources comprise anecdotes that exemplify how the Khaganate occasionally assessed the depth of scientific knowledge by querying scholars from Iran and appraising their responses. In the scholarly competition among civilizations, one of the most esteemed contributions from the Turanians is Yusuf Has Hajib's Kutadgu Bilig. In elucidating his work, Yusuf Has Hajib juxtaposes it with contemporary literary and political texts from various cultures, noting that the Chinese refer to such a work as Edebü'l-Mülûk, the Machins as Enîsü'l-Memâlik, the dignitaries of the Eastern Country as Zînetü'l-Ümerâ, the Iranians as Şehnâme-i Türkî, while the Turanians themselves denote it as Kutadgu Bilig. Yusuf Has Hajib (who passed away post-1070) commenced the composition of the work in Balasagun, completed it in Kashgar in 1069, and subsequently presented it to the Eastern Turkic Khagan Tamghach Khan Hasan ibn Sulayman (1069–1103). Composed in both poetic and prose styles in Hakaniyya Turkish, the work represents a classical advisory or political treatise. Limited information is available regarding the life of Yusuf Has Hajib; however, it is clear that he originated from a distinguished family and maintained an elevated social position owing to his wisdom, virtue, and devotion. After dedicating his efforts to Tamghach Khan Hasan, he was bestowed with the title Uluğ Has Hajib. Among individuals predisposed to academic pursuits were also several Turkic khans and their offspring (tegins). For instance, Shams al-Mulk Nasr (1068–1080) distinguished himself as both a

skilled calligrapher and a respected muhaddith (Hadith scholar). Likewise, Kılıç Tamghach Khan Ibrahim ibn Husayn (1178–1204) was recognized as both a skilled calligrapher and a distinguished poet. Historically, he would delegate the sale of the Qur'anic manuscripts he authored to an unidentified individual, deriving his income from the resulting proceeds.

Kaşgarlı Mahmud, the offspring of Hüseyn and the grandson of Kadir Khan Yusuf (who reigned from 1025 to 1031), acquired a comprehensive education and embarked on extensive travels across the Turkic territories prior to reaching Baghdad. In 1074, he introduced his acclaimed Dîvânü Lugâti't-Türk—a Turkish-Arabic dictionary functioning as a linguistic and cultural intermediary—to Caliph al-Muqtadi. Created in reaction to the increasing imperative of acquiring Turkish throughout the Islamic realm extending from Turkestan to the Mediterranean during the Turkish dominance of the 11th century, the Dîvânü Lugâti't-Türk transcends the role of a conventional dictionary. It seeks to educate readers on all facets of Turkish life and culture, encompassing ethnology, ethnography, mythology, folklore, geography, customs, traditions, poetry, proverbs, worldview, as well as medical practices and remedies, sports, and cuisine. Due to this holistic methodology, Kaşgarlı Mahmud is extensively acknowledged as the inaugural Turkish linguist, folklorist, and geographer, thereby solidifying his status as a foundational figure across various domains of Turkish scholarship.

Medicine in the Turkish Khaganate had attained a significant level of sophistication for its historical context. Tamgaç Han İbrâhîm initiated the establishment of a külliye—an integrated complex comprising a hospital (known as dârü'l-merdâ, merdâhâne, or bîmâristân)—to offer care and respite to the vulnerable, the impoverished lacking protection, and individuals suffering from chronic conditions such as paralysis, until their demise. To meet the financial needs of this institution, substantial endowments (vakıfs) were designated. In addition to the aforementioned hospital, purportedly founded in a property belonging to Tamgaç Han İbrâhîm, there existed an additional recognized hospital in Samarkand known as Nimek Bîmâristân. Medical professionals employed in these healthcare institutions, such as physicians and cuppers, underwent vocational training founded on a master-apprentice framework, in addition to formal education at madrasas, which encompassed religious and legal topics vital for their professional qualifications. All operational expenditures were supported by the designated endowment revenues. Another significant aspect is the treatise Bâhnâme, credited to Hibetullah b.

Muhammed al-Tabarî and dedicated to Togan Tegin, the offspring of Tamgaç Han Hasan, which offers valuable perspectives on human physiology. Furthermore, owing to Tamgaç Han Hasan's support for scientific inquiry and scholarship, the distinguished jurist Şemsü'l-Eimme al-Serahsî, near the conclusion of his life, finalized his incomplete work, Mabsûd, under Hasan's patronage. Historical literature was produced during this era; however, a portion of these works has been lost over time. Among these texts is Târîhü Kâşgar, authored by Abdü'l-Gaffâr b. Hüseyn al-Alma'î, which narrates the historical events of the city of Kashgar and was produced during the rule of Tamgaç Han Hasan. Another tribute to Kılıç Tamgaç Han İbrâhîm is the Târîh-i Türkistân composed by Mejdü'd-Dîn Muhammed b. Adnân Sürhaketî. Furthermore, Raziyeddin Nişaburî's Mekârimü'l-Ahlâk was also penned in his reverence. Furthermore, Muhammed b. Ali al-Kâtib al-Samarkandî, the author of Sinbâd-Nâme and Ağrâdü's-Siyâse, held a position in the chancery of Kılıç Tamgaç Han İbrâhîm b. Hüseyn for a certain duration. The poet Edib Ahmed Yüknekî dedicated his instructional poem Atebetü'l-Hakayık to Muhammed Dâd İspehsâlâr Bey, who is thought to have been affiliated with the Khaganate. The available evidence suggests that women within the Turkish Khaganate were provided with scientific education. At the royal court, there existed women skilled in Turkish, Arabic, and Persian, who were engaged as translators and informants. Female children of educated parents were provided with instruction within the familial context. Among them was Fâtıma, the daughter of Alaüddin Muhammed al-Samarkandî (d. 1144), who had attained the status of a jurist. She engaged in the study of jurisprudence directly under the tutelage of her father, subsequently emerging as a distinguished female jurist, rectifying her husband's legal misinterpretations, and her signature and script are featured on fatwas alongside his.[34]

Religion and Sufism in the Turkish Khaganate

The role played by the Samanids and mystic figures such as Abu Nasr Samanid in the Islamization of the Turkish Khaganate significantly influenced its religious structure. During the Samanid era, Transoxiana became a region dominated

[34] Saffet Bilhan, "900 Yıllık Bir Türk Öğretim Kurumu Buğra Han Tamgaç Medresesi Vakıf Belgesi", *AÜEBFD*, XV/2 (Ankara 1982), s.117-124; Saffet Bilhan "Tıp Okulu Niteliğinde, 10 Yüzyıllık Türk Hastanesi Vakıf Belgesi", *AÜEBFD*, XV/2 (Ankara 1982), p.125; Ömer Soner Hunkan, "Ortaçağ Semerkand'ında İlk Modern Türk Üniversitesi: Tamgaç Han İbrahim Medresesi", *Trakya Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Dergisi*, 4/8 (2014), p.17-44; Genç, *op.cit*., p.138-153.

by the Sunni orthodoxy (Ahl al-Sunnah wa'l-Jama'ah) largely due to the efforts of Sheikh Abu'l-Mansur al-Maturidi (d. 944), with this doctrine being disseminated throughout thousands of frontier settlements (ribats) in the steppes. Moreover, beginning with the Abbasid Caliph Harun al-Rashid (786–809), the establishment of the office of chief judge (qadi al-qudat) and the appointment of Hanafi jurists to this position contributed significantly to the recognition and profliferation of the Hanafi school of thought, a jurisprudential tradition characterized by broad tolerance suitable to the geographic and social conditions of the region, in the eastern caliphate, especially in Khorasan and Transoxiana. Under these circumstances, the Turkish Khaganate, which converted to Islam through the influence of the Samanids and their mystic figures, adopted Sunni creed (Ahl al-Sunnah) in matters of faith and embraced the Hanafi school in its practical and legal affairs.

The Turkish Khagans are depicted in historical sources as ascetic, dervish-like figures who embraced Islam through the gateway of Sufism and viewed it from a Sufi perspective. Their first Muslim ancestor, Satuk Buğra Khan, was introduced to Islam and guided toward conversion by Ebu Nasr Sâmânî, a Sufi master of the rank of murshid. The nature of their relationship is detailed extensively in the Tezkiretü'l-Evliya of Satuk Buğra Khan. The Khagans that followed maintained a respectful allegiance to such Sufi personalities, as evidenced by various hagiographical anecdotes that have survived to the present day. For example, an anecdote concerning İlig Nasr—recorded as a devout ascetic—relates that one day, while hunting near Özkend with his servants, he encountered an elderly sheikh carrying firewood on his back as he struggled up a hill. İlig Khan instructed one of his servants to carry the old man's firewood on his horse, to which the old man replied, "If the horse carries it, what benefit is there to the servant?" İlig Khan then told the servant, "Carry it on your back!" The old man responded, "If the servant carries it, what benefit is there to you?" Upon hearing this, İlig Khan dismounted, took the burden onto his own back, and walked for some distance until he became exhausted and perspired. Seeing this, the old man wiped his forehead with his hand and said, "Woe to you, İlig! Today you have borne a burden as light as a feather, but how will you carry on the Day of Judgment the heavier and far greater injustices, evils, and sins than this firewood? Do not tire!" İlig then fainted and fell to the ground. The old man suddenly disappeared from their sight—it was Khidr, peace be upon him. From that day forward, İlig Nasr received the blessing of Khidr's touch, and his condition prospered eternally from that moment onward. According to tradition, İlig Nasr's brother, Arslan Khan Mansur, voluntarily abdicated the throne to



become a dervish. Likewise, the devout Kılıç Tamgaç Khan İbrâhîm b. Hüseyn relinquished his throne to his son and retired into seclusion in Bukhara. Arslan Khan Muhammad was spiritually affiliated with Sheikh Hasan b. Yusuf al-Bukhari al-Sâmânî, known by the sobriquet Nemedpūsh, a Sufi whose nisba "Sâmânî" indicates his descent from, and spiritual succession to, Ebu Nasr Sâmânî, the mentor of Satuk Buğra Khan. Thus, the dynasty remained connected to the same Sufi lineage from its inception. Under Arslan Khan Muhammad's era, Bukhara was purified from the sects of *ibāha* and *bid'ah*.

The close association between the Khagans and the Sufi scholars established a foundation for the significant advancement of Sufism in the area, leading to the emergence of notable figures such as Hoca Ahmed Yesevî. Ahmed Yesevî, a contemporary of Arslan Khan Muhammad, was born in the mid-11th century in Sayram, a modest town in East Turkestan situated along the Karasu River, a tributary of the Shāhyār River that ultimately flows into the Tarim River. For undetermined reasons, he relocated at a young age to Yesi (subsequently referred to as Hazrat-i Turkistan), located between Otrar (Farab) and Savran along the Lower Syr Darya, a region administered by Kadir Khan Ahmed, the son of Arslan Khan Muhammad. In Yesi, Ahmed Yesevî was mentored in spiritual matters by Arslan Baba. In furtherance of his Islamic studies, he journeyed to Bukhara and became a student of Hoca Yusuf Hamedani (d. 1140), who designated him as a khalifa in conjunction with other notable disciples, including Hoca Abdullah Berki (d. 1161) and Hoca Hasan Andaki (d. 1157). Following the demise of Abdullah Berki, Ahmed Yesevî briefly assumed leadership of the lodge in Bukhara before, possibly driven by divine inspiration or his master's directive, returning to Yesi, where he ultimately died in 1166. The Yesevî order experienced a swift proliferation among the Oghuz tribes residing in the Lower Syr Darya, Bukhara, and Samarkand areas and, concurrently with political transformations—particularly the Mongol invasions—expanded its influence to Khorasan, Anatolia, and the Balkans, thereby leaving a noteworthy and enduring legacy. Significantly, notwithstanding the impact of the Samanids, pre-Islamic Turkic beliefs and traditions endured within the context of Islam. The majority of Muslim Turks invoked the name "Tengri" or "Ugan Tengri" to refer to God, signifying the omnipotent deity, whereas the Argu Turks employed the term "Bayat." The prophet was referred to as "yalavaç," religion was designated as "nom," with "Tengri nomı" signifying God's religion and Sharia. Prayer was known as "yükünç," worship as "tapınmak," the affirmation of faith as "kirtginmek," Muslims (particularly Uyghurs) as "Çomak," paradise as "uçmak,"

hell as "tamu," and prayers and blessings as "alkış." Moreover, traditions such as the creation of amulets and divination persisted, highlighting the syncretic characteristics of Turkic Islamic practices during this period.[35]

Urban Development and Art in the Turkish Khaganate

The Turkic Khaganate's inability to advance west of the Syr Darya River and its eventual subordination to the Seljuks and Kara-Khitai led to a transition in their policies from a focus on conquest and military endeavours to predominantly civil initiatives. Within this framework, in addition to economic advancement, construction endeavours undertaken particularly by the khaganate rulers garnered significant attention. The primary financial source was the waqfs founded by rulers and affluent individuals, which, motivated by philanthropic intentions, the desire to protect their wealth from confiscation, or the pursuit of social prestige, supported the development of numerous social institutions in a nation undergoing significant advancement. Tamgach Khan Ibrahim established not only an educational institution and a medical facility but also a palace referred to as Kerjemin. Engaged in the construction of the palace, he motivated the labourers by expressing "may the architect enjoy a prolonged life," thereby underscoring the importance of ensuring that their efforts result in a robust and enduring structure.

During the second reign of Khan Ahmed b. Khizr, he commissioned the construction of a palace in the heart of Bukhara, situated in an area referred to as Jubar (or Juybar). This palace incorporated gardens and water canals and was utilized for three decades, functioning as a residence for successive khagans. While Arslan Khan Muhammad resided in the palace constructed during the reign of Khan Ahmed b. Khizr whenever he visited Bukhara, he ultimately opted to relocate the palace within the fortress. The palace constructed in 1095 was utilized for three decades, indicating that it was likely demolished around 1125. Several years thereafter, Arslan Khan Muhammad erected a palace in the Abu Lais district named

[35] Genç, *op.cit.*, p.125-1138; Ömer Soner Hunkan, "Hoca Ahmed Yesevi'nin yaşadığı Dönemde Aşağı Seyhun ve Maveraünnehr'de Siyasi Ortam (1093-1166)", ed. Ahmet Kartal, *Uluslararası Hoca Ahmed Yesevi Sempozyumu Bildirileri*, Ankara 2017, p.55-72; Ömer Soner Hunkan, "Türk Hakanlığı Dinî Siyasetinde Maturidi Alimlerin Rolü", *Uluslararası Maturidilik Sempozyumu 04-06 Mayıs 2015*, Türkistan-Çimkent/Kazakistan, p.62-64; Hunkan, "Türk Hakanlığı Devrinde Mâverâünnehr'de Hanefî Âlimlerin Rolü", *Devirleri Aydınlatan Meşale İmâm-Azam Ulusal Sempozyum Tebliğler Kitabı, 28-30 Nisan 2015*, Eskişehir 2015.



Dervazache (Small Gate) and established two distinct baths there, one for private use and another located at the palace entrance, both exceptional in their design. Following an extensive tenure as the centre of authority, Arslan Khan Muhammad designated this palace as a madrasa for legal scholars and endowed it with the bath situated at the palace entrance, along with multiple villages. He also commissioned the construction of a private palace for his use at the Sa'd Abad Gate. Shams al-Mulk Nasr constructed the Ribāt al-Malik, alternatively referred to as Ribat al-Murabba', in proximity to Bukhara along the path to Samarkand, potentially initially serving as a palace. During his journey from the political hub Samarkand to Bukhara, Shams al-Mulk Nasr established his headquarters beyond the city limits to minimize disruption to daily urban life, where he engaged with state officials. It is probable that Ribāt al-Malik was constructed for this intention beyond the city of Bukhara. The partially standing facade of this edifice has recently undergone restoration. In addition to military and commercial objectives, Shams al-Mulk Nasr established an additional ribat at Ak Kütel, situated between Samarkand and Khujand, to promote the education and dissemination of Islam among the steppe populations; he was interred there following his demise. Sustaining his initiatives in urban development, Shams al-Mulk Nasr acquired extensive tracts of land adjacent to Bukhara's Ibrahim Gate and established elaborate gardens and structures referred to as "Shams Abad," allocating considerable financial resources to the enterprise. Adjacent to Shams Abad, a meadow designated as "gūrek" was established for distinguished riding animals, enclosed by robust walls approximately one mile in length. Located within was a palace as well as a structure designed for pigeons. The pasture accommodated various wild animals, including deer, gazelles, wild boars, and foxes, all of which were domesticated and confined by tall walls to avert their escape. Nevertheless, Shams Abad was entirely decimated and transformed into ruins during the Seljuk invasion of Transoxiana. During the conflict for the throne with his brother, Shams al-Mulk Nasr reconstructed the Central Mosque, which had been destroyed by fire, and mandated the excavation of a moat between the fortress and the mosque. The timber superstructure of the mosque's minaret was reconstructed using fired bricks. He erected the palace with a maksura (enclosure) situated apart from the fortress.

It is traditionally believed that Shams al-Mulk Nasr commissioned sculptors from Samarkand to enhance the decoration of the maksura and mihrab in Bukhara. The establishment of these imarets was finalized with the aid of prominent local figures and affluent individuals who provided financial support for the required

expenditures. Additionally, it is noted that during his reign, a Central Mosque constructed by an individual named Khan Salar in Sharg, a postal station located near Bukhara, is referenced. Nonetheless, as the imams of Bukhara prohibited the performance of Friday prayers within this mosque, it remained in disuse; its wooden components were acquired by Kadir Khan Jibril, who subsequently dismantled the mosque and utilized the timber for the construction of the Kül Er Tegin madrasa located near Çube Bekalan. Arslan Khan Muhammad enhanced his spiritual awareness through his patronage of the establishment of such philanthropic organizations. In order to mitigate the exhaustion of the city's population and to avert its vulnerability to adversaries, he established a substantial Eid prayer ground adjacent to the city, thereby replacing the dilapidated Shams Abad, which had been relinquished to agricultural use following the Seljuk invasion. He possessed elevated walls, a pulpit made of baked bricks, and a mihrab erected in its vicinity. Arslan Khan Muhammad acquired numerous properties in the urban core, dismantled the Central Mosque and its adjacent minaret near the fortress, and instructed for the minaret to be reconstructed within the city limits. As the impressive minaret approached its final stage of construction, it succumbed to a catastrophic collapse onto the Central Mosque, resulting in the destruction of approximately one-third of the mosque and the complete annihilation of all its carved wooden features. Arslan Khan Muhammad individually funded the reconstruction of the minaret (Kolan Minaret), particularly its upper portion, utilizing durable baked bricks. He also constructed a bridge made of baked bricks across the Sharg River, situated between Sharg and Iskeket, which is alternatively referred to as Samjan or occasionally Harām Kām, in addition to establishing a Central Mosque in Sharg and a ribat towards the western vicinity of Iskeket. He revitalized Beykend, located between Bukhara and Frebr, by establishing numerous charitable endowments and constructing an impressive palace along the Harām Kām River for his personal use. As Beykend was constructed on a modestly elevated terrain, the river water did not consistently reach the imarets, which led Arslan Khan Muhammad to mandate the excavation of a canal ascending the hill. Nevertheless, due to the challenging rocky terrain, extensive expenditures and diligent efforts proved insufficient to extend the canal beyond a single farsakh, leading to the abandonment of the project. He diligently focused on enhancing Bukhara's defenses, reconstructing the dilapidated city fortress, and establishing a new Rabad (suburb) in proximity to the old one, ensuring both were contiguous and robust. The essential characteristic of architectural practices during the Khaganate period was the utilization

of baked brick materials, intended to enhance the structure's stability and durability. Generally speaking, square plans were preferred for ribats, while madrasas had four-iwan layouts. In decorative terms, durable wooden materials that could withstand the test of time were chosen.From this perspective, the architecture of the Turkic Khaganate constitutes the prototype of Turkish art and architecture extending from Turkistan to Anatolia.[36]

[36] Ömer Soner Hunkan, "Karahanlılar (Türk Hakanlığı) Teşkilat, Kültür ve Medeniyeti*", İlk Müslüman Türk Devletleri Tarihi*, AÖF Publications, Eskişehir 2011, p.129-131; Arslan Terzioğlu, "Yeni Kaynaklar Işığında Karahanlı Tıp ve Hastane Tarihine Bir Bakış" *TT*, XIX/110 (1993), p.81-88.

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THE TURKIC KHAGANATE RULERS

RULERS		VASSAL PRINCES OF THE WESTERN DIVISION OF THE KHAGANATE
1.	Bilge Kadır Han (…840-….?)	*Oğulcak Kadır Han (...894-921)*
2.	Bazir Arslan Han (…?-915)	*Oğulcak Kadır Han (...894-921)*
3.	Arslan Han (…? / …?)	*Oğulcak Kadır Han (...894-921)*
4.	Satuk Buğra Kara Han Abdü'l-Kerîm b. Bazir (921-955)	*Satuk Buğra Han Abdü'l-Kerîm b. Bazir (921-955)*
5.	Baytaş Arslan Han Musâ b. Satuk (344-349? / 955-960?)	*İlig Tonga Süleymân (...? / ...?)*
6.	Arslan Han Ebu'l-Hasan Ali b. Musâ (…?-998)	*İlig Tonga Süleymân (...? / ...?)* *Buğra Han Ebû Musâ Hârûn (...?-992)* *(Tonga Tegin) Nasr b. Ali (994-998)*
7.	Togan Han Ahmed b. Ali (998-1018)	*İlig Nasr b. Ali (998-1013)* *İlig Mansûr b. Ali (1012-1013)* *İlig Muhammed b. Ali (1013-1025)*
8	Arslan Han Mansûr b. Ali (1015-1025)	*İlig Muhammed b. Ali (1013-1025)*
9.	Togan Han Muhammed b. Hasan (1025-1027)	*İlig Ali b. Hasan (Ali Tegin) (1025-1026)*
10.	Kadır Han Yûsuf b. Hasan (1027-1031)	*İlig Ali b. Hasan (Ali Tegin) (1026-1035)*
		Hakanlığın Mâverâünnehr Kolu Ali Tegin Oğulları Tamgaç Buğra Kara Hakan Ali b. Hasan (Ali Tegin): (1020-1035) Arslan İlig Yûsuf b. Ali: (1035-1041) Başkent (1020-1032): Buhara Başkent (1032-1041): Kutlug Ordu (Debusiye)

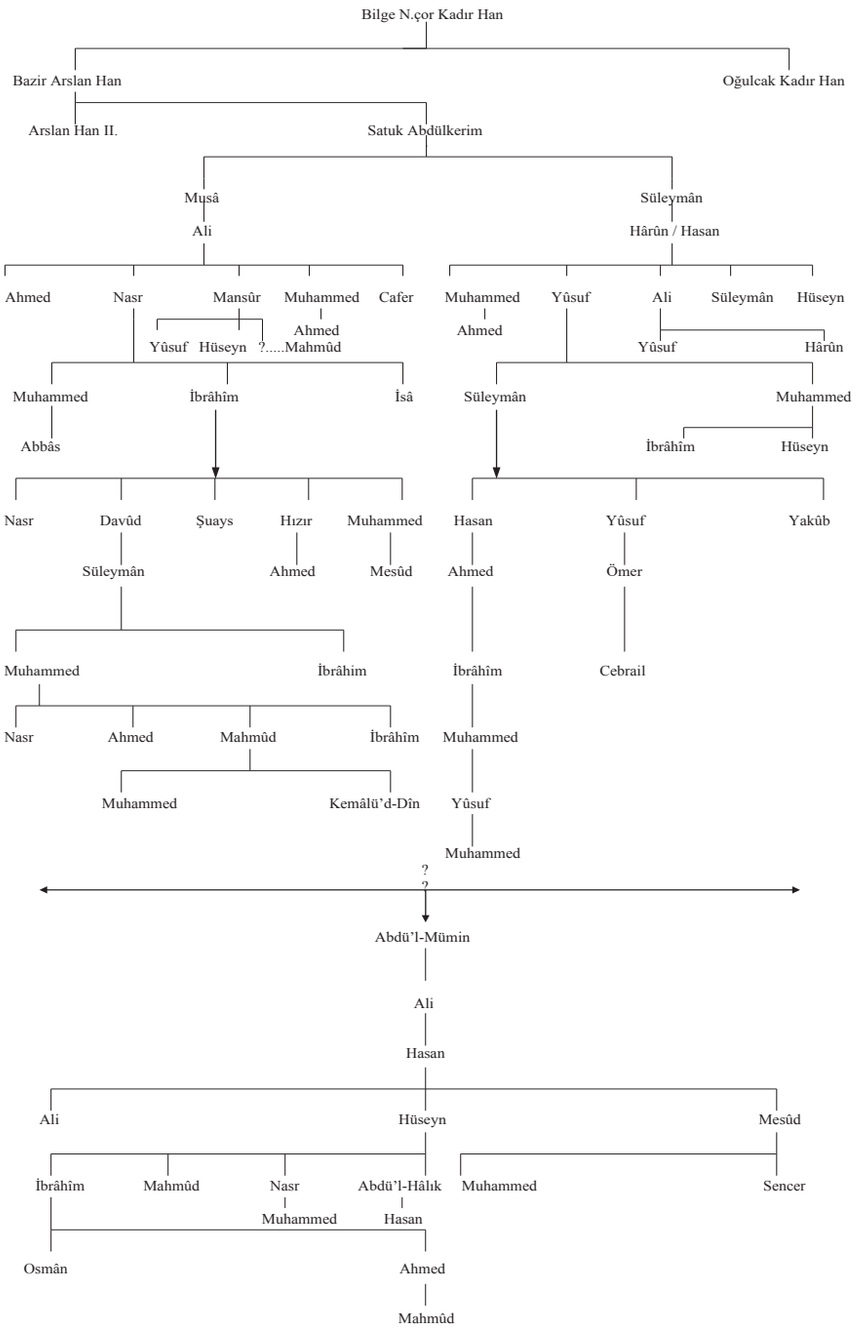
Source: Ömer Soner Hunkan, *Türk Hakanlığı (Karahanlılar): Kuruluş-Gelişme-Çöküş (766-1212)*, Istanbul 2007.

THE TURKIC KHAGANATE (KARAKHANID STATE)

KHAGANS OF THE WESTERN TURKIC KHAGANATE	KHAGANS OF THE EASTERN TURKIC KHAGANATE
Tamgaç Han İbrâhîm (1041-1068)	Arslan Han Süleymân b. Yûsuf (1031-1058)
Şemsü'l-Mülk Nasr b. İbrâhîm (1068-1080)	Buğra Han Muhammed b. Yûsuf (1057-1058)
Tamgaç Han Hızır b. İbrâhîm (1080-108?)	Arslan Hakan İbrâhîm b. Muhammed (1057-1062)
Han Ahmed b.Hızır (108?-1089) ve (1092-1095)	Tuğrul Kara Hakan Yûsuf b. Süleymân (1062-1080)
Muhammed b. İbrâhîm (1089-1092)	Tuğrul Tegin Ömer b. Yûsuf (1080-1089)
Mesûd b. Muhammed (1095-1097)	Tamgaç Han Hasan b. Süleymân (1069-1103)
Süleymân Tegin b. Davûd Köç Tegin (1096-1097)	Arslan Han Ahmed b. Hasan (1103-1128)
Mahmûd Tegin (1096-1098)	Han İbrâhîm b. Ahmed (1128-1160)
Kadır Han Cibril b. Ömer b. Tuğrul Han (1098-1102)	Arslan Han Muhammed b. İbrâhîm (1160-1180)
Arslan Han Muhammed b. Süleymân (1102-1130)	Arslan Han Yûsuf b. Muhammed (1179-1205)
Kılıç Tamgaç Han Hasan b. Ali (1130-1132)	Arslan Han Muhammed b. Yûsuf (1204-1211)
Tamgaç Buğra Han İbrâhîm b. Süleymân (1132-1135)	
Hakan Mahmûd b. Muhammed (1135-1141)	
Tamgaç Han İbrâhîm b. Muhammed (1141-1156)	
Tamgaç Han Mahmûd b. Hüseyn b. Hasan (1157-1158)	
Çağrı Han Ali b. Hasan (1158-1160)	
Kılıç Tamgaç Han Mesûd b. Hasan (1160-1167)	
Arslan Han (1169-1170)	
Kılıç Tamgaç Han Muhammed b. Mesûd (1170-1179)	
Kutluğ Bilge Han Abdu'l-Hâlık b. Hüseyn (1178-1179)	
Kılıç Tamgaç Han İbrâhîm b. Hüseyn (1178-1204)	
Kılıç Arslan Hakan Osmân b. İbrâhîm (1202-1212)	

Source: Ömer Soner Hunkan, *Türk Hakanlığı (Karahanlılar): Kuruluş-Gelişme-Çöküş (766-1212)*, Istanbul 2007.

Genealogy of the Khagan Dynasty



Source: Ömer Soner Hunkan, *Türk Hakanlığı (Karahanlılar): Kuruluş-Gelişme-Çöküş (766-1212)*, Istanbul 2007.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: "The first coin bearing the name 'Turk' / Fergana / Dirham / Hijri 381 / No:1 "King of the East, Star of the State, Supporter of the Cause, Abū Mūsā TÜRK KHAGAN, Protector of the Commander of the Faithful, the Caliph, Arslan Tegin, son of Uluğ Tegin."

Turkic Khaganate Coins						
NO	**TYPE**	**DATE (Hicrî)**	**LOCATION**	**FRONT SIDE**	**BACK SIDE**	**PERIMETER**
1	D	381	Fergâna	-	ملك المشرق شهاب الدولة و ظهير الدعوة ابو موسى **ترك خاقان** مولى امير المومنين الخليفة ارسلان تكين بن الغتكين	-

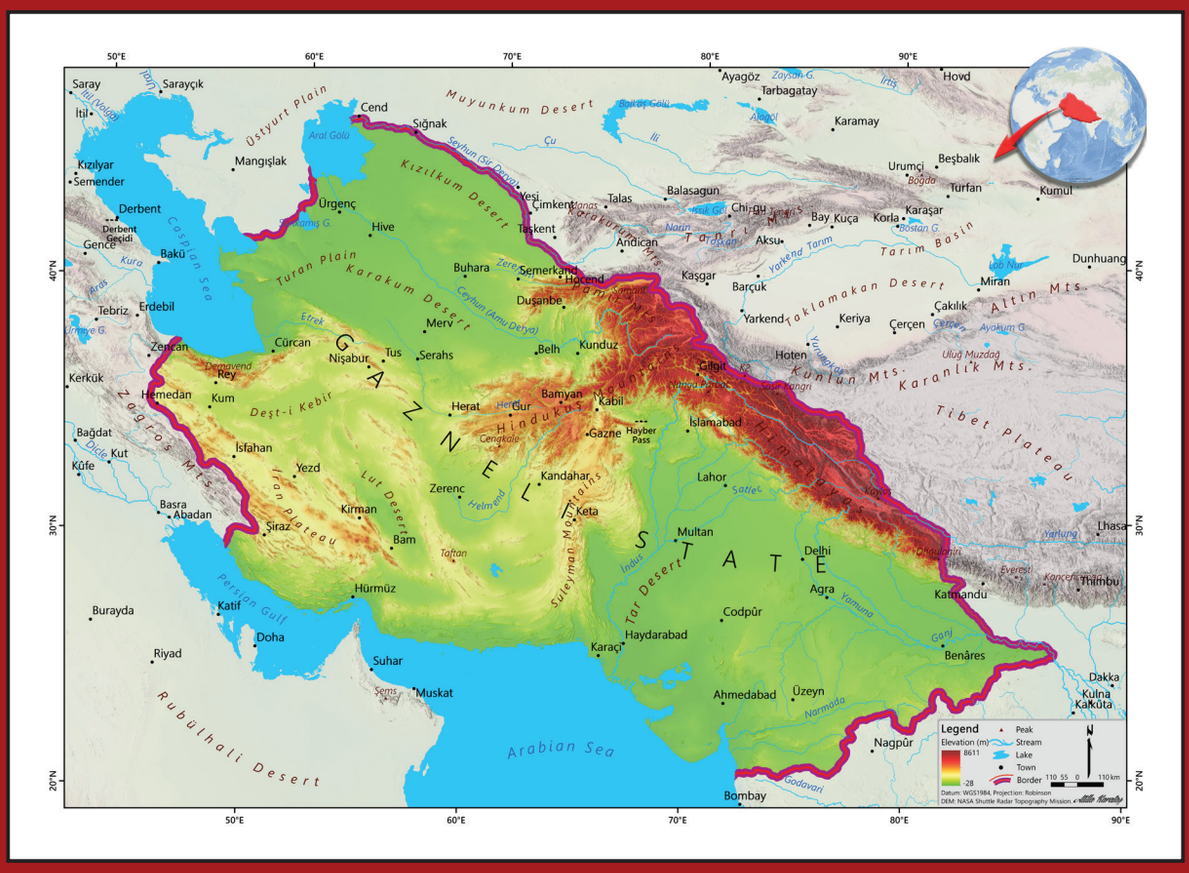


Source: Ömer Soner Hunkan, *Türk Hakanlığı (Karahanlılar): Kuruluş-Gelişme-Çöküş (766-1212)*, Istanbul 2007.



Source: Ömer Soner Hunkan, *Türk Hakanlığı (Karahanlılar): Kuruluş-Gelişme-Çöküş (766-1212)*, Istanbul 2007.

The Ghaznavid State


GAZNELİ STATE
Legend
Peak
Stream
Lake
Town
Border
Elevation (m)
8611
-28
Datum: WGS1984. Projection: Robinson
DEM: NASA Shuttle Radar Topography Mission
Muyunkum Desert
Kızılkum Desert
Karakum Desert
Turan Plain
Üstyurt Plain
Aral Gölü
Caspian Sea
Persian Gulf
Arabian Sea
Rubʻ al Khali Desert
Dasht-i Kavir
Lut Desert
Iran Plateau
Zagros Mts.
Tar Desert
Thar Desert
Hindukush Mts.
Pamir Mts.
Tian Shan Mts.
Kunlun Mts.
Karanlık Mts.
Altın Mts.
Tibet Plateau
Taklamakan Desert
Tarım Basin
Suleyman Mountains
Sulaiman Mountains
Himalayas
Indus
Yamuna
Ganges
Godavari
Narmada
Helmand
Tarim
Syr Darya
Amu Darya
Ceyhun (Amu Darya)
Seyhun (Syr Darya)
Tigris
Euphrates
Kura
Aras
Etrek
Murghab
Hari Rud
Kabul
Herat
Gur
Gazne
Hayber Pass
Cenghkola
Taftan
Helmend
Satlej
Yarlung
Everest
Kanchenjunga
Thimbu
Katmandu
Lhasa
Benares
Agra
Delhi
Multan
Lahor
Islamabad
Kandahar
Zerenc
Keta
Codpûr
Haydarabad
Karaçi
Ahmedabad
Üzeyn
Nagpûr
Bombay
Dakka
Kulna
Kalkuta
Bağdat
Basra
Abadan
Küfe
Kut
Dicle
Isfahan
Yezd
Kirman
Şiraz
Bam
Hürmüz
Katif
Burayda
Doha
Riyad
Suhar
Muskat
Sems
Cend
Sığnak
Yesi
Çimkent
Taşkent
Urgenç
Hive
Derbent
Derbent Geçidi
Gence
Bakü
Tebriz
Erdebil
Zencan
Cürcan
Nişabur
Tus
Serahs
Merv
Rey
Demavend
Hemedan
Kum
Kerkük
Semerkand
Buhara
Duşanbe
Belh
Kunduz
Andican
Talas
Balasagun
Mangışlak
Saray
Sarayçık
Kızılyar
Semender
Ayagöz
Tarbagatay
Karamay
Urumçi
Beşbalık
Turfan
Kumul
Hovd
Bogda
Karaşar
Korla
Kuça
Bay
Aksu
Kaşgar
Barçuk
Yarkend
Keriya
Çerçen
Çakılık
Miran
Dunhuang
Hoten
Gilgit
Ulug Muzdag
Ayakum G.
Lop Nur
Issyk Gölü
Balkaş Gölü
Aydar Gölü
Zaysan G.
Irtiş
Ili
Çu
Manas
Naryn
Kara Kurt
Tengis
Bostan G.
Yarkend Tarım
Tarım
Qaidam
Yarkend Kş.
Qara Yanghoc
Qara Yangri
Kunlun Mts.
Karanlık Mts.
Altın Mts.
Tibet Plateau
Taklamakan Desert
Tarım Basin
Ayakum G.
Ulug Muzdag



THE GHAZNAVID STATE

(963-1186)

Erkan GÖKSU*

Introduction

The adoption of Islam by the Turks represents a significant juncture in Turkish historical narrative. At this juncture, three Turkish states emerged, influencing the trajectory of Turkish history through varying regions and pathways, while their established political, military, social, cultural, and religious frameworks delineated the character of Turkish history for the subsequent millennium. While the Karakhanids facilitated the establishment and perpetuation of Turkish-Islamic history, culture, and civilization in Turkistan, the Seljuks established the groundwork for Western Turkism, and the Ghaznavids oriented southward towards contemporary Afghanistan and Northern India, emerging as the progenitors of Turkish-Islamic culture and civilization in this area referred to as South Turkistan. The Ghaznavid State, established in 977 by Sebuktigin after Emir Alptegin's acquisition of Ghazni in 963, governed for two centuries until 1186 a large region extending from modern-day Afghanistan to northern India, and from Khorasan to Transoxiana. Referred to in contemporary sources as the Sebuktiginians, Mahmoudids, or Ghaznavids, this Turkish state played a pivotal role in the dissemination of Islam and

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the advancement of Turkish-Islamic culture and civilization, primarily through its political and military endeavours, as well as the cultural and civil institutions it founded, particularly in India. While the Indian region had been exposed to Islam previously, it was predominantly through the Ghaznavid conquests that Islamization experienced significant acceleration; thereafter, various Turkish and Islamic dynasties exerted influence over the region, sustaining this process until the fall of the Baburids in the mid-19th century.

The most significant contribution of the Ghaznavids to Turkish and Islamic history was the commencement of the conquests of Northern India, which facilitated the establishment of a robust presence for the Islamic world in the Punjab region and provided a foundation for future Indian conquests. Furthermore, the vestiges of Turkish-Islamic civilization currently observable in the region are fundamentally grounded in the impact of the Ghaznavids. Given that the Muslim population in nations such as Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh represents approximately one-third of the global total of 1.6 billion Muslims, the importance of the Indian conquests initiated by the Ghaznavids becomes increasingly evident.

The Emergence of the Ghaznavids: Alptegin

Although Turkish-Arab relations date back to the pre-Islamic period, it can be asserted more intense contact between the two peoples began during the advance of Islamic armies into the Caucasus, Khorasan,[1] and

[1] Khorasan is a large geographical region that covers the lands starting from Iraq to the Indian border. Cities such as Juwayn, Beyhak, Toharistan, Ghazna, Sijistan, Kirman, Nishapur, Herat, Merv, Balkh, Abiyurd, Sırhan are considered to be within Khorasan. The name Khorasan was formed from the Old Persian words hur (sun) and asan (ayan "coming, rising") and means "the place where the sun rises, the land of the sun; the eastern region". The name probably emerged during the Sassanid period and became widespread in a short time. Khorasan was historically the name of a very large geographical region in the northeast of Iran. Today, the territory of the region is divided into three parts; Merv, Nesa and Serahs region is in Turkmenistan, Balkh and Herat region is in Afghanistan and the remaining part is in Iran. The largest part is in Iranian hands and is surrounded by the two aforementioned states and the other Iranian provinces of Mazenderan, Simnan, Yazd, Kirman, Baluchistan and Sistan. Its administrative centre is Mashhad and the provinces of Mashhad, Isferayin, Bucnurd, Birjend, Tayyibat, Turbeticam, Turbadihaydari, Darrigaz, Sebzevar, Shirvan, Tabes, Firdevs, Kabnat Kuchan, Kashmir, Gunabad and Nishabur are connected to the province. For more information, see Yakut el-Hemevi, *Mu'cemü'l-Buldan*, II, Beyrut, 1397/1977, p.350-354; Cihan Piyadeoğlu, *Güneşin Ülkesi Horasan-Büyük Selçuklular Dönemi*, Istanbul 2012; Cl. Huart, "Horasan", *İslam Ansiklopedisi (İA)*, V/1, p.561; Osman Çetin, "Horasan", *Diyanet İslam Ansiklopedisi (DİA)*, XIII, p.234.



Transoxiana.[2] Recognized globally for their warrior-like attributes, including within Arab Islamic society, the Turks encountered Islam as Islamic forces advanced into Turkic territories. This process led to an heightened period of political and military relations, marked by various events that can sometimes be categorised as neither negative or positive. Although the military campaigns conducted during the Umayyad period had a negative character and adversely affected relations between the Turks and Muslim Arabs in every respect, this situation gradually changed and took on a positive tone during the Abbasid era. During this period, among the Turks—who were key players in the Abbasid revolution—both the number of those accepting Islam and those serving within the ranks of the Abbasid state increased. So much so that, during the reign of Abbasid Caliph Al-Ma'mun, an elite guard unit composed of Turks was established, and significant investments were made to equip this army. By the second quarter of the 9th century, it is evident that Turkish commanders and military units composed of Turks had become the most important force for both the Abbasid army and the state itself.[3]

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2 Transoxiana, whose literal translation is "the region beyond the river," denotes the area situated beyond the Jihun (Amu Darya) River. During the era in which the Umayyad Caliphate expanded its frontiers to reach the Amu Darya, the region situated east of the river was referred to by the Arabs as Transoxiana (Mā warāʾ al-nahr). Gradually, this term was embraced by the local populace, and even individuals residing west of the river persisted in employing it—referring to "beyond the river"—until the beginning of the 20th century. Before this period, the area was recognized as the Land of the Hephthalites (Bilād al-Hayāṭila), which referenced the Ephthalites or White Huns, and was additionally referred to as Turan and Turkistan. Historically, the region has been acknowledged as a Turkish territory since antiquity. Nevertheless, as the terms Turan and Turkistan encompass all Turkish territories broadly, it is evident that Transoxiana constitutes merely a segment of these extensive regionp. Transoxiana is commonly classified into five segments: first, the central area of Sogd (Sogdiana), which comprises Bukhara and Samarkand and functions as a significant agricultural and trade hub; second, the western region of old Khwarazm, which includes the delta formed by the Amu Darya and the Aral Sea; third, the southern zone that encompasses Saghaniyan and Khuttal; fourth, the upstream area along the Amu Darya, including Badakhshan and Wakhan; and fifth, the northern segment that comprises the regions of Ferghana and Shash.V. V. Barthold, *Moğol İstilasına Kadar Türkistan*, haz. H. Dursun Yıldız, TTK Publishers, Ankara 1990, pp.83-230, 239-260; V. V. Barthold, "Maveraü'n-nehr", *İA*, VIII, pp.408-409; Zekeriya Kitapçı, *Yeni İslam Tarihi ve Türkler*, II, Konya 1999, pp.63-70; Zekeriya Kitapçı, *Orta Asya'da İslamiyet'in Yayılışı ve Türkler*, Konya 1998, pp.69-88; Eşref Buharalı, "İstahri ve İbn Havkal'ın Haritalarına Göre Maveraü'n-nehr", *TDA*, 99 (1995), pp.29-77; Osman Gazi Özgüdenli, "Maveraünnehir", *DİA*, XXVIII, pp.177-180.

3 It is well-established that the Turkish individuals designated as Mamluks were not engaged in domestic or agricultural work; rather, they were predominantly maintained in urban settings as an "elite guard unit" by caliphs, high-ranking officers, and provincial governors,



THE GHAZNAVID STATE

The Turks, recognized as one of the most pivotal ethnic, political, and military components of the Khorasan and Transoxiana regions during Abbasid dominance, retained their importance for numerous dynasties that arose from the decline of Abbasid central authority in these territories. The Samanids were among the dynasties administering Khorasan and Transoxiana as tributaries to the Abbasid Caliphate. In the Samanid state, with its hub in Bukhara, a multitude of Turkish commanders and statesmen occupied administrative and military roles. By the late 10th century, coinciding with the decline of the central Samanid administration, Turkish commanders in administrative and military positions acquired considerable influence over the governance of the state. Notably, the emirs Hüsamü'd-Dawla Abu'l-Abbas Taş, Begtüzün, Faik al-Hassa, and Simcuri accumulated considerable authority. One of these commanders was Alptegin, whose narrative commenced in the slave market and culminated in his elevation to the throne of Ghazni.[4] The founder of the Ghaznavid Empire, also known historically as the Sebuktiginids or Mahmudis, was none other than Alptegin himself.[5]

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and they occupied a position of esteem within society. Substantial documentation pertaining to this subject exists within Arab-Islamic sources (refer to: Erkan Göksu, Selçuklunun Mirası: Gulam ve İkta, Kronik Kitap, Istanbul 2017). Ghazni, situated 145 km southwest of Kabul at the intersection of India and Khorasan, rests on a plateau at an altitude of 2,225 meters above sea level. While its pre-Islamic history remains ambiguous, archaeological investigations indicate that the city was established prior to the Common Era. Ghazni functioned as the capital of the Ghaznavid Empire and attained its zenith during this time. In fact, the majority of Ghaznavid rulers, who governed Afghanistan and its adjacent regions until 1186, were based in Ghazni. Geographers of the tenth century characterize Ghazni as an important warehouse city within the trade network connected to India. Following the Ghaznavids, the city was governed by the Seljuks and sustained its significance throughout that period.

4 Located 145 km southwest of Kabul, between Hind and Khorasan, Ghazni presents the appearance of a plateau and reaches an elevation of 2,225 meters above sea level. The city's pre-Islamic history remains obscure; however, archaeological excavations indicate that it was founded before the Common Era. Ghazni served as the capital of the Ghaznavid State and witnessed its most flourishing period during this era. Indeed, until 1186, most of the Ghaznavid rulers—who held sway over Afghanistan and its surrounding regions—resided in Ghazni. Geographers of the 10th century note that Ghazni was an important warehouse city in the trade with India. After the Ghaznavids, the city came under Seljuk rule and retained its significance during this period as well. See Yakut, IV, p.202-203; M. Longwoth Dames, "Gazne", İA, IV, p.741; Enver Konukçu, "Gazne", *DİA*, XIII, p.479.

5 Erkan Göksu, *Afganistan'ın İhtişamlı Hanedanı: Gazneliler (963-1186)*, Selenge Publishers, Istanbul 2021, p.11.



Alptegin was originally a Ghulam bought from a slave market[6] by the Samanid Emir Ahmed b. Ismail (907–914).[7] Ahmed b. Ismail placed him in the ghulam quarters of the Samanid palace.[8] Thus, because he had entered the service of

6 Ahmad b. Ismail succeeded to the Samanid throne after the death of his father Ismail b. Ahmad in Juy-i Muliyan on 15 Safar 295/25 November 907. See en-Narşahi, *Tarih-i Buhara*, Turkish trans. Erkan Göksu, TTK Publishers, Ankara 2013, pp.134-135; Gerdizi, *Tarih-i Gerdizi*, Tashih ve Mukabele: Abdu'l-hayy Habibi, Tahran 1363, p.325; es-Sem'ani, *el-Ensab*, III, [el-Mektebetü'ş-Şamile], p.201; İbnü'l-Esir, *el-Kâmil fi't-Tarih*, VIII, Turkish trans. Ahmet Ağırakça, Istanbul 1989, pp.13-14; İbn Kesir, *el-Bidaye ve'n-Nihaye*, XI, Turkish trans. Mehmet Keskin, Istanbul 1995, p.188; el-Cuzcani, *Tabakat-ı Nasıri*, I, published by Abdu'l-hay Habibi, Kabil 1342, p.202; Hamdullah Müstevfi-i Kazvini, *Tarih-i Güzide*, nşr. Abdu'l-Hüseyin Neva'i, Tahran 1362, p.378; Mirhand, *Tarih-i Ravzatu's-Safa*, IV, Tashih ve tahşiye: Cemşid Kiyanfer, Tahran 1385, pp.2821-2823.

7 Nizamü'l-mülk, *Siyasetname*, trans. M. Altay Köymen, Ankara 1982, p.139; Erdoğan Merçil, *Gazneliler Devleti Tarihi*, Ankara 1989, p.1. Also see Erdoğan Merçil, "Gulam", *DİA*, XIV, Istanbul 1996, pp.181-182.

8 Under this system, ghulams (enslaved soldiers or servants) recruited as captives or slaves received training in both religious and military disciplinep. Religious instruction was imparted by scholars and clergy, whereas military training—encompassing horseback riding, the utilization of bows, swords, spears, and various light and heavy weaponry, along with instruction in strategy, tactics, and other elements of military science—was administered by senior military personnel. In addition to these elements, appropriate behavior in the service of the ruler and other state officials, protocols for diverse ceremonies, and language education were also significant aspects of Ghulam training. Once their qualifications, expertise, and valor were duly acknowledged and they had acquired experience in diverse services, ghulams were categorized based on their aptitudes and assigned to various palace functions or integrated into the military. In accordance with their performance, they may ascend in rank, potentially attaining the position of emir (commander or governor). This system facilitated the development of numerous skilled ghulams throughout Islamic history, some of whom, following the disintegration of central authority—or as a consequence of confrontations with it—declared independence and established autonomous political entitiep. For detailed insights into the training of ghulam-Mamluks and the function of ghulam institutions (ghulamhane), refer to: Erkan Göksu., "Türkiye Selçuklu Devletinde Gulam Eğitimi ve Gulamhaneler", *Nüsha Şarkiyat Araştırmaları Dergisi (A Journal of Oriental Studies)*, 7 (24) (2007), pp.65-84; David Ayalon, "Memluk Devletinde Kölelik Sistemi", trans. Samira Kortantamer, *Tarih İncelemeleri Dergisi*, IV (1988), p.221 etc.; Hassanein Rabie, "The Training of the Mamluk Faris", *War, Technology and Society in the Middle East*, ed. V.J. Parry, Oxford University Press, London 1975, p.153-163; Reuven-Preiss Amitai, *Mongols and Mamluks: The Mamluk-Ilkhanid War 1260-1281*, Cambridge University Press, 1995, p.17, 73, 216-218, 221; Reuven Amitai, "The Mamluk Institution, or One Thousand Years of Military Slavery in the Islamic World", *Arming Slaves: From Classical Times to the Modern Age*, edp. Christopher Leslie Brown, Philip D. Morgan, Yale University Press, New Haven 2006, p.46-64; Amelia Levanoni, "The Sultan's Laqab: A Sign of a New Order in Mamluk Factionalism", *The Mamluks in Egyptian and Syrian Politics and Society*, edp.Michael Winter-Amalia Levanoni, E.J. Brill, Leiden 2004, pp.84-100; David Nicolle, *Saracen Faris*

the Samanids, Alptegin had the opportunity to receive a remarkable education for the period in which he lived. Ahmed b. Ismail was murdered[9] by his own men on January 12, 914.[10] This situation greatly worried Alptegin because like all other ghulams, his future depended on the his master.[11] However, both through his traditional ghulam training and the achievements he demonstrated in different duties, Alptegin was managed to keep serving in the palace even after Ahmed b. İsmail had been killed. After some time he was emancipated by the Samanid Emir Nasr b. Ahmed, and rose to the rank of emir and then to the position of Hacibü'l-Hüc-

1050-1250 A.D., Osprey, London 1994, pp.10-11; Altan Çetin, *Memlûk Devletinde Askerî Teşkilât*, (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis), Gazi Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Ankara 2002, pp.57-78; Altan Çetin, "Memluk Askerinin Eğitimi", *Türkiye Sosyal Araştırmalar Dergisi*, VII/2, (Ağustos 2003), pp.219-235; Salim Koca, *Selçuklularda Ordu ve Askeri Kültür*, Ankara 2005, pp.154-161; Göksu, *Selçuklunun Mirası Gulam ve İkta*, pp.82-97.

9 Ahmad b. Ismail was killed on the third of the third of the three hundred years of Jamaziye'l-ahir (15 January 913) according to Hamdullah Müstawfi-i Qazvini, and on Thursday night, seven days before the month of Jamaziye'l-ahir of the year 301 (24 January 914) according to Mirhand and Ibn al-Asir. Kazvini, p.389; Mirhand, IV, p.2825; İbnü'l-Esir, VIII, p.69-70.

10 en-Narşahi, pp.137-138; es-Sem'ani, III, p.201; Erkan Göksu, "Alptegin: Köle Pazarından Gazne Tahtına", *Türk Dünyası Araştırmaları Dergisi (TDAD)*, p.191 (Mart-Nisan 2011), p.101.

11 The relationship between master and slave was frequently characterized as resembling that of a father and son. To such an extent that during the Seljuk era, individuals tasked with the education of ghulams were called "fathers." (Refer to: Göksu, Selçuklunun Mirası, pp. 65–84; Erkan Göksu, Türkiye Selçuklularında Ordu, Türk Tarih Kurumu Publishers, Ankara 2010, p. 285 ff.) Similarly, within the Mamluk system, the term "father" (baba) served as a respectful title for the administrators and staff of the taşthane—a department responsible for the maintenance of the master's attire, possessions, and other items, thereby invoking a comparison to caring paternal figures. Moreover, the association between a mamluk/ghulam and his master (ustaz/ustad) was frequently articulated via the analogy of a paternal-filial bond. (el-Kalkaşandi, *Subhu'l-A'şa fî Sınaati'l-İnşa*, IV, (Tahkîk. Muhammed Hüseyin Şemsüddîn), Beyrut 1988, p.10;Said Abdu'l-Fettâh Aşur, *el-'Asru'l-Memâlikî fî Mısr ve'ş-Şam*, Kahire 1986, p.412; Mahmud Nedim Ahmed Fehim, *el-Fennü'l-Arabi el-Ceyşü'l-Mısri fi'l-Asri'l-Memluki el-Bahri (1250-1383/648-783)*, [y.y] 1983, pp.200-201; İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devleti Teşkilâtına Medhal*, Türk Tarih Kurumu Publishers, Ankara 1988, p.344; Robert Irwin, *The Middle East in the Middle Ages: The Early Mamluk Sultânate*, 1250-1382, (Southern Illionis Univesty Press), Carbondale 1986, p.89; David Ayalon, "Studies on the Structure of the Mamluk Army I", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, University of London, XV/2 (1953), p.207; Linda P. Northrup, *From Slave to Sultân: The Career of al-Mansur Qalawun and the Consolidation of Mamluk Rule in Egypt and Syria (678-689 A.H./1279-1290 A.D)*, Franz Steiner Verlag, Stuttgart 1998, p.185-186; Amitai, "The Mamluk Institution", p.62; Çetin,"Memluk Askerinin Eğitimi", pp.219-235.



cab during the reign of Nuh b. Nasr (943-954), who ascended to the Samanid throne after Nasr's death.[12]

According to Nizamü'l-Mülk, Alptegin was "a very trustworthy, loyal, astute and thoughtful leader, loyal to his men, beloved by the soldiers under his command, courageous, God-fearing, and respectful of the holy bond of loyalty."[13] His good fortune continued to prosper during the rule of Abdu'l-Melik b. Nuh b. Nasr (954-961), the son of Nuh b. Nasr, who assumed the throne at the tender age of ten after his father's demise.[14] Fundamentally, the era of Abdulmelik was characterized by a significant augmentation in the prominence of Samani emirs and commanders within state governance, with the political environment influenced by tensions between these nobles and governmental officials.[15] While the Samanid palace and Abdulmelik were significantly governed by Vizier Abu Mansur Muhammad b. Uzayr and the Khurasani forces commanded by Abu Said Bakr b. Malik al-Fergani, the commanders of Turkish origin emerging from the ghulam system

12 The role of *Hacibü'l-hüccab*, also known as *emir-i hacib*, in Muslim Turkish entities referred to the individual tasked with the administration and management of court ceremonies, the enforcement of protocol during royal ceremonies, and the facilitation of communication between the sovereign and senior state notablep. It was the most elevated position within the palace structure and was directly beneath the vizier in the state hierarchy in terms of seniority. Göksu, "Alptegin: Köle Pazarından Gazne Tahtına", p.102).

13 Nizamü'l-mülk, p.135.

14 The reign of Nuh b. Nasr was generally characterised by internal instability and the revolts of prominent military commanderp. The sultan died in Rabi'u'l-ahir on 343/August-September 954. en-Narşahi, pp.141-145; Hamdullah Müstevfi-i Kazvini, p.381; Mirhand, IV, p.2840; el-Cuzcani, I, p.210; es-Sem'ani, III, p.202; İbnü'l-Esir, VIII, p.438; For information about the reign of Nuh the First refer to Barthold, *Türkistan*, p.263 etc; Aydın Usta, *Şamanizm'den Müslümanlığa Türklerin İslamlaşma Serüveni: Samani Devleti (874/1005)*, Istanbul 2007, pp.157-193; Tülay Yürekli, *Samaniler*, (Unpublished MA Thesis), Ankara Üniversitesi SBE, Ankara 2002, p.94-104; C.E. Bosworth, "Nuh I", *EI2*, VIII, pp.109-110; K.V. Zettersteen, "Nuh I", *İA*, IX, pp.346-347.

15 In relation to these developments refer to Carl Brockelmann, *İslam Milletleri ve Devletleri Tarihi I*, trans. Neşet Çağatay, Ankara 1964, p.156; Richard N. Frye, "The Samanids", *The Cambridge History of Iran*, IV, Cambridge 1993, p.152; C.E. Bosworth, "The Early Ghaznavids", *The Cambridge History of Iran*, IV, (From the Arab Invasion to the Saljuqs), ed. R.N. Frye, Cambridge University Press, 1975, pp.162-164; Erdoğan Merçil, "Samaniler Devletinde Türklerin Rolü", *İÜ. Tarih Dergisi*, p.35, [Hakkı Dursun Yıldız'a Hatıra], (1994), pp.253-266; Erdoğan Merçil, "Simcuriler I-Simcur ed-Devati", *İÜ Tarih Dergisi*, P.32 (1979), pp.71-88; Erdoğan Merçil, "Simcuriler II-İbrahim b.Simcur", *İÜ Tarih Enstitüsü Dergisi*, P.10-11 (1981), pp.91-96; Merçil, "Simcuriler III-Ebu'l-Hasan Muhammed b. İbrahim b. Simcur", *İÜ Tarih Dergisi*, P.33 (1982), pp.115-132; Erdoğan Merçil, "Simcuriler IV-Ebu Ali b Ebul-Hasan Simcur", *Belleten*, XLIX/195 (1985), p.547-567.

progressively gained prominence. Following events early in Abdulmelik's reign, almost all of the Iranian statesmen in the military and administrative organization were purged, and the Samanid state came under the influence of Turkish-origin emirp. Meanwhile, the increasingly powerful Alptegin had gained full control over the Samanid palace and expanded his influence over Abdulmelik. Alptegin insisted that Abdulmelik relieve Vizier Abu Mansur Yusuf b. Ishaq of his duties and appoint Abu Ali Muhammad b. Muhammad al-Balami in his stead. Left with no alternative, Abdulmelik acceded to Alptegin's demand, ended the tenure of his vizier, and chose al-Balami as his successor.[16]

Abdulmelik experienced considerable unease regarding the proximity between al-Balami, whom he perceived as a significant threat to his own interests, and Alptegin. In an effort to diminish Alptegin's sway over both himself and the palace, he resolved to appoint him to a position located outside the capital. While he initially extended the offer of the governorship of Balkh to him,[17] Alptegin dismissed this role as it was significantly inferior to his present standing. Subsequently, Abdulmelik extended to him the role of commander-in-chief (sipehsalar) of Khorasan, headquartered in Nishapur.[18] Despite necessitating his departure from the palace, Alptegin acquiesced to the appointment, deeming it at least commensurate with his rank, and subsequently departed for Nishapur on February 10, 961. Nevertheless, his presence within the Samanid palace persisted due to the intermediary role of Vizier al-Belami, with whom he had reached an agreement

[16] Gerdizi, pp.353-354, Merçil, *Gazneliler Devleti Tarihi*, p.2.

[17] Situated along the Dehas River, south of the Amu Darya, and at the base of Mount Kuhibaba, Balkh occupies a pivotal role in the historical narrative of Islamic culture and civilization. According to one tradition, paper was initially manufactured in Balkh, and during the Islamic era, papermaking commenced in Baghdad through the initiatives of the Abbasid vizier Ja'far ibn Yahya al-Barmaki. Subsequently, scholars from Balkh specializing in disciplines such as hadith, tafsir, jurisprudence, philosophy, medicine, and geography disseminated their knowledge to numerous cities, particularly Baghdad and Damascus, thereby significantly contributing to the advancement of Islamic culture and civilization. Consequently, the city acquired the appellations "Qubbat al-Islām" (Dome of Islam) and "Dār al-Fiqh" (Abode of Jurisprudence). Refer to Yakut el-Hamevi, I, p.479; R. Hartmann, "Belh", İA, II, pp.485-487; Tahsin Yazıcı, "Belh", *DİA*, V, p.416.

[18] Nishapur was one of Khorasan's most advanced cities in the middle ages both from a trade and economic perspective, and also in terms of culture and civilisation. Yakut, V, pp.331-333; E. Honingman, "Nişapur", *İA*, IX, pp.302-305.



that the vizier would provide him with updates on all state matters and seek his counsel on each issue.[19]

Shortly after this event, Abdulmelik passed away from a horse riding accident while playing polo (November 23, 961).[20] The untimely death of Abdulmelik caused concern over who should ascend the Samani throne. Most of the state notables took the view that Ebu Salih Mansur b. Nuh, the other son of Nuh b. Nasr and Abdulmelik's brother, should ascend to the throne. Nonetheless, there were individuals who endorsed Abdulmelik's son, Nasr. Among them was Alptegin, who contended that "a son holds precedence over a brother" in terms of succession to the throne. Pursuant to this perspective, El-Belami elevated Nasr b. Abdulmelik to the throne. Nevertheless, the state authorities, under the leadership of the Turkish emir Faik el-Hassa, who held the position of hajib to Ebu Salih Mansur b. Nuh, colluded, deposed Nasr, and subsequently swore allegiance to Ebu Salih Mansur b. Nuh (Shawwal 350 / November 961).[21]

Following Nasr, who received Alptegin's endorsement, he occupied the throne for a mere day before being succeeded by Ebu Salih Mansur b. Nuh, during which time the sway of Faik el-Hassa and his affiliated emirs markedly augmented within the Samani palace. Although El-Belami was compelled to acquiesce to the circumstances, Alptegin commenced a rigorous observation of the evolving situation. He was informed that his adversaries in the Samani court were actively undermining him, provoking the new Samani Emir Mansur with statements such as, "You cannot achieve independence on the throne without eliminating Alptegin; your edicts will remain unenforced." For half a century, he governed Horasan, accumulating considerable wealth and riches. The soldiers consistently follow his instructions.

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19 Gerdizi, p.354; Merçil, *op.cit.*, p.2; C.E. Bosworth, "The Ghaznavids", *History of Civilizations of Central Asia*, vol. IV, Part I, [The Age of Achievement: AD. 750 to the end of the Fifteenth Century], ed. M. P. Asimov and C. E. Bosworth, Unesco 1996, p.95-96; Yürekli, *op.cit*., p.105-106; Bosworth, "The Early Ghaznavids", p.164-165; Usta, *op.cit*., p.201-202.

20 Gerdizi, p.354. al-Juzjani states that 'Abdu'l-Malik was killed after falling from his horse. al-Juzjani, I, p.210. al-Narsahi records that he died on the night of the day he fell from his horse. en-Narşahi, p.146.

21 Gerdizi, p.355; en-Narşahi, p.146-147; el-Cuzcani, I, p.211; Hamdullah Müstevfi-i Kazvini, p.382; Mirhand, IV, p.2843-2844; Barthold, *Türkistan*, p.269-270; Frye, "The Samanids", p.152; C.E. Bosworth, "Samanids", *EI*., VIII, Leiden 1995, p.1027-1028; Erdoğan Merçil, "Samaniler Devletinde Türklerin Rolü", p.260-261; Yürekli, *op.cit*., p.107; Güller Nuhoğlu, *Beyhaki Tarihi'ne Göre Gaznelilerde Devlet Teşkilatı ve Kültür*, (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis), Istanbul Üniversitesi SBE, Istanbul 1995, p.3.

By capturing him, your treasuries will be replenished, and your soul will achieve tranquillity. Nonetheless, confronted with this circumstance, Alptegin found himself indecisive regarding his course of action.[22]

Prior to advancing towards Bukhara, Alptegin endeavoured to communicate with Mansur bin Nuh through Muhammad b. Abdurrezzak—who had formerly held the position of commander of Khurasan and was at that time located in Tus—in an attempt to discourage him from being swayed by individuals advocating against Alptegin; however, his efforts proved unsuccessful. Upon learning that Mansur bin Nuh had relieved him of his command in Khurasan and designated Muhammad b. Abdurrezzak as his successor, he resolved to proceed to the capital city of Bukhara. In December 961 or January 962, he departed from Nishapur. Recognizing his inability to confront the strength of the Samanids, he relinquished the notion of advancing towards Bukhara. As it was no longer feasible for him to return to Nishapur or even stay in Khurasan, it was imperative that he locate a new homeland for himself and his adherents without delay. After making an evaluation of the circumstances, Alptegin made a truly historic decision: he turned toward Ghazni and chose it as his new base.[23]

In a swift manner, Alptegin disclosed his determination to the commanders within his army, affording them the autonomy to opt for either a return to the service of the Samanids or to persist alongside him. With a cadre of three thousand devoted adherents still intact, he advanced toward Ghazni through Balkh, disseminating invitations for individuals keen to participate in his jihad. Nevertheless, Abu Salih Mansur, leading the forces of the Governor of Khorasan, sent a substantial contingent of sixteen thousand soldiers to confront Alptegin. The confrontation between the Samanid forces and Alptegin occurred in April 962 at the confined Hulm Pass, situated between Balkh and Hulm—a valley spanning four farsakhs and bordered by villages on both sidep. In the intense conflict, Alptegin's

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22 Göksu, "Alptegin: Köle Pazarından Gazne Tahtına", p.107.

23 The reason for Alptegin's determination of Ghazni as his new field of activity was as follows: The western regions, Fars and Kirman were in the hands of the Büveyhip. It was difficult for him to establish any kind of dominance here. However, the city of Ghazni in the south was in the hands of a local dynasty that was not very powerful at that time. It was easier to capture than other placep. In addition, he could easily strengthen himself with the spoils he would obtain from Ghazni in his raids to the non-Muslim Indian lands. The need for soldiers could also be met with the people who would come with him for both booty and expedition. Göksu, "Alptegin: Köle Pazarından Gazne Tahtına", p.110.



trusted associate Sebüktigin exhibited considerable bravery, culminating in Alptegin's eventual triumph.[24]

[24] "The Samanid army headed from Bukhara to Balkh with 16,000 fully equipped horsemen. As the army arrived in Tirmidh and sought to traverse the River Jayhun (Oxus), Alptegin left Balkh and proceeded to Hulm. Located between Balkh and Hulm was a narrow gorge, extending four farsakhs (about 24 km) in length, commonly referred to as the Hulm Pasp. On either side of this pass, villages were situated. Alptegin entered the ravine and instructed 200 mounted soldiers selected from his most devoted ghulams to serve as rear guards at the entrance of the pasp. During this period, Alptegin possessed 2,200 Turkish ghulams, all recognized for their virtue and courage. Furthermore, 800 cavalrymen from various regions enlisted to support the cause of ghaza (holy war). Upon the arrival of the army of the Emir of Khurasan, they encamped on the plain preceding the pass; however, due to their inability to traverse it, they remained encamped for a duration of two months. Following this interval, Sebüktegin assumed the role of guarding the pasp. Upon arrival, he observed that the plain was populated with soldiers and that the vanguard of the opposing forces had been positioned. Reflecting inwardly, he mused, "Our leader Alptegin has relinquished all of Khurasan, Iraq, and Transoxiana, along with their riches and abundance, to the Emir of Khurasan, and has instead directed his focus towards the ghaza." Nevertheless, these individuals have arrived with the intent to harm him! They experience no remorse in the presence of God and fail to acknowledge His significance," he addressed the ghulams accompanying him, stating: "This constitutes our responsibility now." God assists those who are marginalized. These individuals are despots. Let's confront them today—irrespective of our master's approval; let's observe the outcome. Accompanied by 300 ghulams, he initiated a swift assault on the enemy vanguard, successfully dispersing them and progressing towards their encampment. Prior to the enemy's mobilization, he eliminated over a thousand individuals. After assuming arms, Sebüktegin retreated to the apex of the gorge. Upon learning of Sebüktegin's actions, Alptegin summoned him and inquired, "Why did you engage in an attack?" To which Sebüktegin responded, "My lord, our endurance had reached its limit." This situation cannot be ameliorated through patience; it necessitates a swift and decisive action. For the duration of our existence, we will fight to protect your life. Let us observe the ensuing developments. Alptegin, notably impressed, responded, "It is imperative that you execute this sacred responsibility with enhanced wisdom." During the evening prayer, instruct the men to dismantle and remove the baggage from the gorge. Instruct Togan to lead one thousand elite soldiers to the valley located on the right, while you, Sebüktegin, accompany one thousand valiant ghulams to the valley situated on the left. I shall emerge from the pass accompanied by the baggage and a thousand cavalrymen, maintaining a visible presence in the plain. When the enemy observes no one at the entrance to the gorge by morning, they will likely infer that I have escaped. They will pursue us into the confined valley. When they fail to locate us, you will arise from both flanks, engage them with your swords, and subdue or seize them. Individuals who have not yet engaged will pivot and retreat. As they seek to evade, we shall engage in combat. We will facilitate their escape, subsequently targeting their encampment and confiscating the spoils. They adhered to the strategy and emerged from the gorge. On the subsequent day, the Khurasan army, completely equipped, arrived at the entrance of the gorge arranged in combat formation. Encountering no individuals, they progressed a farsakh into the gorge and discovered no evidence of Alptegin's encampment. Perceiving that he had escaped, they remarked, "Permit us to



Alptegin progressed on his path with his small army, bringing the governor of Bamiyan,[25] Shir-i Barik, and the Hindu Shahi ruler of Kabul under his dominance before reaching Ghazni.[26] During that time, Ghazni was under the rule of Abu Bakr Lawik from the Lawik dynasty.[27] Following a four-month siege, he seized Ghazni on January 12, 963, thereby establishing the groundwork for the Ghaznavid State.[28]

pursue them into the plain, eliminate them, and apprehend Alptegin." They progressed rapidly, positioning their elite forces at the forefront. Upon emerging from the gorge, they observed Alptegin situated in the plain, accompanied by a thousand cavalrymen and a contingent of infantry. As soon as half the army appeared, Togan launched an assault on the rear from his ambush with a force of a thousand men, inflicting significant casualties. Alptegin, upon returning from the front, joined the offensive. Within approximately one hour, they annihilated a significant segment of the adversary. The opposing commander was struck by a spear and subsequently fell from his equine mount. The remaining soldiers exhibited panic and subsequently retreated. Alptegin and his troops pursued them to their camp, where they conducted a raid, confiscating horses, weapons, camels, gold, silver, silk products, and ghulams—essentially anything of value they could locate. The Samanid army left behind their encampments and provisions as they retreated. For approximately one month, residents of Balkh arrived at the deserted camp and removed items. The count of fatalities, exclusive of the injured, totaled 4,750." Nizamü'l-mülk, p.143-146. See Gerdizi, p.356; Kazvini, p.382; Mirhand, IV, p.2844; İbnü'l Esir, VIII, p.469; Göksu, *Gazneliler (963-1186)*, p.20-23 for information on this battle.

25 "Bamiyan is a city in the Hindu Kush, located in the valley between the Amuderya and Indus basins, to the south of the main summit line of the mountains, in a valley where one of the most important transport routes passes and 2545 m. above sea level. This situation explains the importance of Bamiyan as a commercial centre. Furthermore, the city was a fortified position in the Middle Ages..." For more information see W. Barthold, "Bamiyan", *İA*, II, p.296-298; Also refer to *Hududü'l-Alem*, p.66; Yakut el-Hamevi, I, p.330.

26 Nizamü'l-mülk, p.146; Merçil, *Gazneliler Devleti Tarihi*, p.4.

27 At that time, Ghazna was under the rule of Abu Bekr-i Levik of the Levik dynasty. It is possible that Abu Bekr Levik, the ruler of Ghazni, was Hindu. However, this name was also read in Turkish as "Enuk" (animal cubs, lion, hyena, wolf, wolf, dog cubs) and it was also suggested that he might be a Turk. Alptegin captured Ghazna after a four-month-long siege (13 Dhu al-Hijjah 351/12 January 963) and thus laid the foundations of the Ghaznavid State. Abu Bekr Levik took refuge with Kabul-Shahs after losing Ghazni. Refer to Merçil, *Gazneliler Devleti Tarihi*, p.4; Göksu, "Alptegin: Köle Pazarından Gazne Tahtına", p.106-112.

28 Gerdizi, p.354; el-Cuzcani, I, p.211; Hamdullah Müstevfi-i Kazvini, p.382; Mirhand, IV, p.2844; Barthold, *Türkistan*, p.269; Merçil, *Gazneliler Devleti Tarihi*, p.4-5; C.E. Bosworth, *The Ghaznavids, Their Empire in Afghanistan and Eastern Caliphate (994-1040)*, New Delhi 1992, p.37; C.E. Bosworth, "The Ghaznavids", *History of Civilizations of Central Asia*, IV, [The Age of Achievement: AD 750 to the End of the Fifteenth Century], ed.M.P. Asimov and C.E. Bosworth, Unesco 1996, p.96; B. Spuler, "Ghaznawids", *EI2*, II, p.1050; M. Longworth Dames, "Gazne", *İA*, IV, p.741-742; Enver Konukçu, "Gazne", *DİA*, XIII, p.479-480.



Despite Alptegin's alienation from the Samanids and his relocation to Ghazni, Mansur remained relentless in his pursuit. In the same year (963), Ebu Salih Mansur dispatched an army of 25,000 to 30,000 soldiers under the leadership of Ebu Jafer to confront Alptegin in Ghazni. Nevertheless, the results once more advantaged Alptegin.[29] Having once more vanquished the Samanid forces, Alptegin further consolidated his authority over Ghazni. Subsequent to this defeat, Ebu Salih Mansur ultimately acknowledged that he could not compel Alptegin into submission through military means and terminated hostilities against him. He issued a formal decree (manshur) that exonerated Alptegin and conferred upon him authority over the territories he had acquired.[30] Thus, although it could be argued that Ebu Salih Mansur indirectly brought Alptegin under his control. This in reality demonstrated Mansur's weakness in the face of Alptegin's authority not only manifested his influence but also functioned as an official acknowledgment of his control over Ghazni.

Following this occurrence, Alptegin initiated his military campaigns (ghazawat) into India. His achievements and the expeditions in India garnered considerable interest among Muslims from Khorasan and Transoxiana, leading to a swift augmentation in the number of soldiers under his command. Nevertheless, he passed away on September 13, 963, less than a year following his ascendance to the throne of Ghazni. Consequently, his narrative, which commenced in the slave market, culminated in his ascension to the throne of Ghazni. The state established by Alptegin in Ghazni exerted a significant and enduring influence on the region that persists to the present day.[31]

Following the death of Alptegin, his son Abu Ishaq Ibrahim (963–966) ascended to succeed him. Nevertheless, during his approximate three-year tenure, he did not exhibit effective leadership qualities. In the interim, Abu Bakr Lawik, the erstwhile ruler of Ghazni, vigilantly observed the unfolding events. Upon discovering that the administration in Ghazni had become destabilized and that Abu Ishaq had forfeited authority over the military, he promptly intervened. Abu Bakr Lawik advanced on

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29 Nizamü'l-mülk, p.147-148; Mirhand, IV, p.2844; Hamdullah Müstevfi-i Kazvini, p.382; Bosworth, *The Ghaznavids*, p.38. En-Narsahi erroneously states that the Samanid forces were under the command of Ash'as bin Muhammad and that Alptegin was defeated in the battle in front of Ghazni and fled to Balkh.en-Narşahi, p.148-149.

30 el-Cuzcani, I, p.221; en-Narşahi, p.149; Mirhand, IV, p.2844; Bosworth, *The Ghaznavids*, p.38.

31 For a comprehensive account of Alptegin, see. Erkan Göksu, "Alptegin: Köle Pazarından Gazne Tahtına", *Türk Dünyası Araştırmaları Dergisi (TDAD)*, 191 (Mart-Nisan 2011), p.97-116; Erdoğan Merçil, Gazneliler Devleti Tarihi**,** TTK Publishers, Ankara 1989, p.5; Erdoğan Merçil, "Alptegin", *DİA*, II, p.526; W. Barthold, "Alptegin", İA, I, p.386; C. E., Bosworth, "The Ghaznavids", p.96.

Ghazni and captured the city in 694 AH / 1294 CE. Abu Ishaq Ibrahim sought assistance from the Samanid ruler Mansur b. Nuh and, with his aid, regained control of the city on September 26, 965. Nevertheless, having reclaimed Ghazni with Samanid support, Abu Ishaq Ibrahim was obliged to recognize the Samanid influence over the region.[32] This circumstance persisted until the passing of Abu Ishaq Ibrahim on November 12, 966. Nevertheless, his passing initiated a renewed phase of instability in the administration of Ghazni. As he was without a male heir, one of the Turkish commanders, Bilge Tegin (966–975), succeeded him. Bilge Tegin, a highly esteemed commander under Alptegin, promptly dispatched an emissary to the Samanids to affirm his allegiance following his ascension to power. Nonetheless, he was unable to deter the Samanid emir Faik al-Hassa from advancing towards Ghazni. In the subsequent conflict, Bilge Tegin achieved victory, thereby reinforcing his dominance over the area. Bilge Tegin governed for approximately a decade until 975, when he succumbed to an injury incurred during the siege of Gerdiz.[33]

Subsequent to Bilge Tegin, Böri Tegin (975–977) assumed the throne of Ghazni. Sources indicate that he was characterized as a "highly cruel" individual. Not only did he subject his populace to mistreatment, but he also exhibited minimal engagement in matters of state. Dissatisfied with his governance, a coalition of nobles and commanders from Ghazni endeavored to find a resolution by extending an invitation to the former ruler, Abu Bakr Lawik, to return to Ghazni. In response to their invitation, Abu Bakr Lawik advanced toward Ghazni accompanied by his military forces. The Ghazni troops encountered Abu Bakr Lawik in the vicinity of Çarh.[34] In the ensuing conflict, the Ghaznavids attained victory largely credited to the contributions of Sebüktigin. By the end of the conflict, Abu Bakr Lawik's military forces had been disseminated, and he was apprehended and subsequently executed. As a result, Ghazni was spared a significant danger. Notwithstanding Abu Bakr Lawik's defeat and eventual demise, neither the insufficient governance of Böri Tegin nor the attitudes of the populace and commanders towards him experienced any change. In reaction to this situation, both the general populace and military leadership commenced initiatives aimed at removing Böri Tegin from the throne. After internal discussions, the commanders agreed that Sebüktigin was the most suitable candidate to ascend to the throne.[35]

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32 Merçil, "Gazneliler", p.481.

33 Göksu, *Gazneliler (963-1186)*, p.24.

34 Charh is a settlement south of Kabul on the banks of the Logar River between Ghazni and Kabul.

35 İbnü'l-Esir, VIII, p.589-590. el-Cuzcani, *Tabakat-ı Nasıri (Gazneliler, SelçuklularAtabeglikler ve Hârezmşahlar)*, Türkçe trans. Erkan Göksu, TTK Publishers, Ankara 2015, p.26-27.



The Early Period of the Ghaznavids: Sebüktegin (977–998)

Sebüktigin was among Alptegin's most sincere associates, notable for his bravery, acumen, and leadership attributep. Due to these characteristics, Alptegin held him in high esteem and further formalized their relationship by marrying him to his daughter. Following Alptegin's demise, Sebüktigin garnered considerable esteem among the emirs and endorsed the governance of Alptegin's son Abu Ishaq, along with that of Bilge Tegin and Böri Tegin. He consistently supported them and remained by their side. In fact, the deterioration resulting from Böri Tegin's imprudent administration, especially the risk of Ghazni reverting to Lawik rule—was predominantly mitigated by the endeavours of Sebüktigin.

When it became evident that Böri Tegin was no longer capable of governing the Ghaznavids, the prominent emirs convened to elect a new ruler. Each party nominated a candidate; however, objections were raised against all nominees, with their shortcomings being articulated sequentially. Eventually, Sebüktegin's name was brought up. All individuals became silent; no one was able to identify any flaw in him. Only one emir remarked, "The sole imperfection of Sebüktegin lies in the existence of older and more senior ghulams than himself." Nonetheless, he received instruction from our mentor Alptegin, and in terms of valour, fortitude, and exemplary character, he closely resembles him. In accordance with this, the emirs reached a consensus regarding Sebüktegin and resolved to establish him as their ruler. Sebüktegin initially declined the proposition; however, subsequent to the insistence and potential intimidation from the emirs, he ultimately agreed to assume the throne of Ghazni,

Ayrıca bk. Merçil, *Gazneliler Devleti Tarihi*, p.6-7. Similar to several other sources, Ibn al-Athir omits reference to Bilgetegin and Böritegin, who succeeded Ishaq. Al-Juzjani narrates this era by stating: "(Following the demise of Abu Ishaq), the Turkish populace elevated their leader, Bilge Tegin, to the emirate throne." He was a righteous and pious individual, widely recognized for his bravery in combat. He governed for a decade prior to his demise. Emir Sebüktegin was present alongside him during that period. Following Bilge Tegin, Emir Böri assumed the position of leadership. He was an individual characterized by significant cruelty. Consequently, a delegation from the citizenry authored a letter from Ghazna to Abu 'Ali ibn al-Anuq, extending an invitation to him. Abu 'Ali dispatched the offspring of the King of Kabul to seek aid. They met at the edge of Charh. Emir Sebüktegin, leading five hundred Turks, engaged and vanquished them. He was responsible for multiple fatalities, captured a significant number of prisoners, and likewise secured two elephants, which he transported back to Ghazna. Following this triumph, individuals who had become disillusioned with Böritegin's oppressive rule convened and collectively resolved to elevate Emir Sebüktegin as the ruler of Ghazna. On Friday, the 27th of Sha'ban in the year 366 AH (April 20, 977 CE), red (ruby-hued) parasols and banners were elevated above the citadel. Consequently, the emirate and kingship were bestowed upon Sebüktegin.

subject to specific conditions. Following the emirs' oath of allegiance under all conditions, they ascended him to Alptegin's throne. A coronation ceremony was conducted to honor him as the newly inaugurated Emir of Ghazni. On Friday, April 20, 977, his distinctive red canopy and banners (alem) were elevated above the fortress.[36]

Sebüktegin is regarded as the inaugural sovereign of the Ghaznavids, and the Ghaznavid dynasty persisted through his lineage. Consequently, numerous historical sources designate them as the "Âl-i Sebükteginiyan," signifying the descendants or dynasty of Sebüktegin. Therefore, while Alptegin is recognized as the founder of the Ghaznavid state, Sebüktegin is regarded as the true establisher of the dynasty.[37] Sebüktegin, purportedly hailing from the Barshan (Barsgan) region near Lake Issyk-Kul, situated in contemporary Kyrgyzstan, or from a Turkic tribe bearing the same name, was apprehended during an incursion by the Tuhsis and transported to Bukhara during the rule of the Samanid Emir Nasr I (943–954). There, he was acquired by the Samanid commander Alptegin in 959, subsequently enlisting in his service.[38] Owing to his inherent qualities and unwavering loyalty, Sebüktegin rapidly advanced through the ranks to become one of Alptegin's most trusted individuals. Alptegin further reinforced their relationship by marrying his daughter to Sebüktegin. With Sebüktegin's accession to the throne in 977, the characteristics of the Ghaznavid state began to undergo transformation. Although initially nomi-

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36 el-Cuzcani, p.26-27; Utbi, p.4; İbnu'l-Esir, VIII, p.589-590; Kazvini, p.389-390; Mirhand, *Ravzatu's-safa (Müluk-i Gazneviyye)*, Türkçe trans. Erkan Göksu, Kronik Publishers, Istanbul 2017, p.28-30.

37 Erdoğan Merçil, "Sebük Tegin", *DİA*, XXXVI, p.262-263; Neslihan Durak, "Gaznelilerin Kuruluşuna Kadar Afganistan'da Türkler", *Afganistan Üzerine Araştırmalar*, der. Ali Ahmetbeyoğlu, Ankara 2002, p.39-40; Göksu, *Gazneliler (963-1186)*, p.28.

38 Emir Sebüktigin had heard from his father that his grandfather was called Karabeckem. [His name was Cuk, and in Turkic the word "Beckem" meant Gajgav.] The meaning of Karabeckem was "black ox" (black gajkav). In Turkistan, people who heard his name would flee in fear. Imam Muhammad ʿAli Abu'l-Qasim Imadi, in the Tārīkh-i Mujadwal, describes his heroism as follows: "Emir Sebüktigin was descended from the children of Yazdegerd Shāhriyār. When Yazdegerd was killed in a mill in the lands of Merv, the Commander of the Faithful ʿUthmān (may God be pleased with him) was on the caliphal throne. The retainers and household of Yazdegerd fled to Turkistan, where they established kinship ties with the Turks. After two or three generations, they became Turks. Their castles still stand in that land. Their lineage and ancestry (as narrated before the sovereign of the world) was as follows: Emir Sebüktigin (son of Cuk) Karabeckem, son of Kara Arslan, son of Kara Melet, son of Kara Yağman, son of Firuz, son of Yazdegerd, son of Shāhriyār al-Fārsī [Malik al-ʿAjam]. God knows best the truth of the matter." el-Cuzcani, p. 23; see also Erdoğan Mercil, "Sebük Tegin," pp. 262–263.



nally subordinate to the Samanids, the Samanid authority over Khorasan and Transoxiana was rapidly deteriorating. Under the leadership of Sebüktegin, the Ghaznavids implemented strategic and courageous measures, gradually progressing toward establishing themselves as the dominant force in the region.[39]

Having initially consolidated his authority by enhancing relationships with the populace, the military, and state officials, Sebüktegin was prepared to extend his state's boundaries and augment the treasury through military endeavours. In pursuit of this objective, he initially focused his attention on the area of Zabulistan in eastern Afghanistan.[40] By marrying the daughter of a local noble from Zabulistan, he aimed to win the support of the local population.

During this period, Bust,[41] which was under the rule of a Turkish commander named Togan Tegin, was invaded by another Turkish commander named Baytuz.[42] Togan Tegin solicited assistance from Sebüktegin, vowing to remit taxes and offer fealty in exchange for liberating the city from Baytuz. Sebüktegin advanced to Bust, overcame Baytuz, and reinstated the city under the authority of

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39 Erdoğan Merçil, "Sebük Tegin", *DİA*, XXXVI, p.262-263.; Neslihan Durak, "Gaznelilerin Kuruluşuna Kadar Afganistan'da Türkler", *Afganistan Üzerine Araştırmalar*, der. Ali Ahmetbeyoğlu, Ankara 2002, p.39-40.

40 Zavülistan, also known as Zavulistan, is referenced in the Shahnameh as the domain of Rustam. It includes the eastern region of Afghanistan, notably the Ghazna area. The mother of Sultan Mahmud of Ghazna belonged to a distinguished noble family from Zabul. Consequently, he was additionally referred to by the appellation Mahmud-i Zabili (Mahmud of Zabul). According to *Nüzhetü'l-Kulub*, the climate was hot, the fruit plentiful and the hunt grounds and pastures were splendid. Hamdullah Müstevfi-i Kazvini, *Nüzhetü'l-Kulub*, Eng. trans. *Nuzhat al-Qulub*, trans. G. Le Strange, E. J. W. Gibb Memorial Series: XXIII, Luzac & Co, London 1919; Yakut el-Hamevi, *Mu'cemü'l-Buldan*, III, Beyrut 1397/1977, p.125; İbn Hurdadbih, *el-Mesalik ve'l-Memalik*, Turkish trans. *Yollar ve Ülkeler Kitabı*, trans. Murat Ağarı, Istanbul 2008, p.41, 45.

41 "A historical metropolis situated in Afghanistan's Sistan region, currently found in a state of dilapidation. It was located on the left bank, immediately downstream from the confluence of the Helmand River and its tributary, the Arghandab, within a segment of the river conducive to navigation. The city was situated along the path linking Herat to Kandahar through Girishk. During its era, it was esteemed for its productivity and aesthetic appeal. Medieval Arab geographers observed that, in addition to its inherent attractiveness, the region was also susceptible to recurring epidemics. The existing dilapidated and parched condition of the city and its environs stands in stark contrast to its natural resources, as the presence of the Helmand River and its tributaries facilitates easy irrigation and renders the region conducive to various forms of agriculture. During the medieval period, the city fulfilled a crucial commercial function, located as it was between Khorasan or Fars and Sindh—along the pathway from Baghdad to India. In fact, Istakhri references Bust's trade with India." Tahsin Yazıcı, "Büst", *DİA*, VI, p.495.

42 İbnü'l-Esir'de "Babitur (بابی تور)" İbnü'l-Esir, VIII, p.590.

Togan Tegin. Nevertheless, Togan Tegin failed to honor his commitment. More ominously, he conspired to murder Sebüktegin. In retaliation, Sebüktegin penalized him by capturing Bust in 977. This event was a significant turning point for the Ghaznavids, and Sebüktegin's success was recorded by contemporary historians as the beginning of the "State of the House of Sebüktegin" or the "Ghaznavid State."[43]

Following his success in Bust, Sebüktegin also annexed the Kusdar[44] region in northeastern Baluchistan to Ghaznavid territory and progressed his hold as far as Tokharistan[45] and Zemindawar.[46] Subsequently, Sebüktegin set his sights on India. Given the presence of formidable powers such as the Samanids to the west

[43] İbnü'l-Esir, VIII, p.589; Utbi, p.2-6 vd; Mirhand, p.32 etc.

[44] Kusdar (Kuzdar) is a city located in present-day Pakistan's Balochistan Province, 85 miles south of Kalat. It was captured by Sebüktigin in 977–978, upon which the local ruler agreed to fulfill the conditions and obligations of vassalage. However, during the reign of Sultan Mahmud, the local ruler displayed disobedience. Subsequently, in December 1011, the city was besieged and once again forced to acknowledge Ghaznavid authority. For further information on Kusdar and its conquest, see Yakut el-Hamevi, IV, p.353; el-Utbi, Kitab-ı Yamini, trans. James Reynolds, London 1958, p.32-33; Reşidü'd-din Fazlullah, Cami'ü't-Tevarih (Gazneliler Bahsi), II/4, nşr. Ahmed Ateş, TTK Publishers, Ankara 1999, p.10-11; İbnü'l-Esir, IX, p.183.

[45] "A historical area situated in the upper basin of the Oxus River (Amu Darya), Toharistan is referenced in diverse sources under various forms including Tokharistan, Tuharistan, Tohayristan, and Tu-ho-lo. The designation originates from an ethnic group known as the Tocharians (Tohar), who are referenced within the consortium of tribes responsible for the decline of the Greco-Bactrian Empire during ancient times. The 10th-century Islamic geographer Istakhri offers the most specific delineation of Toharistan's boundaries in a restricted sense: it is situated to the east of Balkh and to the west of Badakhshan, to the south of the Oxus River (Amu Darya), and to the north of the Hindu Kush range. During the Islamic era, Toharistan, in its wider definition, included all the mountainous regions situated on the right and left banks of the upper Oxus, falling under the authority of Balkh. In prior sources, Toharistan is bifurcated into Upper and Lower Toharistan. Upper Toharistan was situated to the east of Balkh and to the south of the Oxus, while Lower Toharistan was positioned farther east, on the river's western bank. As per Istakhri, the cities of Toharistan comprised: Siminjan, Hulm, Baghlan, Sakalakand, Varvaliz, Arman, Rawan, Taloqan, Sekimshet, Rub, Saray, Asam, Andarab, Mazr, and Kah. The 10th-century author Qudama ibn Ja'far observes that of the two principal routes emanating from Merv, one directed towards Shash and the Turkic territories, while the other extended towards Toharistan. Hüseyin Salman, "Toharistan", *DİA*, XLI, p.214-215.

[46] It is a large province between Gur and Sicistan. In Hududu'l-Alam, it is described as a prosperous region between Gur and Bust. If a narrower definition is made, it is the region in Afghanistan to the south-east of Gur and Zabulistan and the city of Bust. The wide valley where the Helmand River flows from the Hindu Kush mountains to the lower Bust was called Zemin-Daver by Arab geographers." For comprehensive information see Erdoğan Merçil, "Zemin-Daver", *İA*, VIII, Istanbul 1978, p.516-518; Also see *Hududü'l-Alem*



and the Karakhanids to the north encircling the Ghaznavids, expansion in those directions proved to be exceptionally challenging. Conversely, northern India was a prosperous area abundant in spoils, yet it was devoid of a robust central authority during that period. Furthermore, the Hindu Raja Caypal[47] was a non-Muslim ruler who vigorously impeded the dissemination of Islam in the region and periodically conducted incursions into Muslim territories, thereby adversely affecting the local population. Consequently, Sebüktegin identified North India as the optimal region for the Ghaznavids' expansion and designated it as a darü'l-gazve (land of military expeditions), focusing his endeavors accordingly. The Hindu Shahi ruler Caypal engaged Sebüktegin with a military force augmented by the presence of war elephantp. In 986, a significant confrontation occurred at a location referred to as Atabetu'l-Gurek, resulting in the Ghaznavids' triumph. Notwithstanding objections raised by his son Mahmud during the campaign, Sebüktegin concluded a treaty with Caypal. Nevertheless, shortly following Sebüktegin's return to Ghazni, Caypal violated the accord by declining to surrender the forts to the Ghaznavids and detaining the Ghaznavid officers and soldiers stationed to garrison those forts. In reaction, Sebüktegin mobilized his forces and returned to the area; following considerable conflict, he successfully captured Lamghan Fort, dismantled local temples, shattered idols, acquired substantial plunder, and subsequently returned to Ghazni.[48]

Having established alliances with regional local rulers, Caypal accumulated a substantial army and initiated an offensive against the Ghaznavidp. Sebüktigin engaged in confrontation with him in the vicinity of Kuram, located to the south

Mine'l-Meşrik İle'l-Magrib, trans. Abdullah Duman-Murat Ağarı, Istanbul 2008, p.66; Yakut el-Hamevi, II, p.434.

47 "Jayapala (Caypal) served as a raja within the Hindu Shahi dynasty, which governed regions of contemporary Afghanistan and Pakistan from 850 to 1026. Sebüktegin initiated military campaigns against the Hindu Shahis, perceiving them as impediments to the propagation of Islam into northern India. During that period, Jayapala occupied the throne. He engaged Sebüktegin with a formidable army augmented by the presence of war elephants. Nonetheless, he suffered a defeat in the conflict at Gūrek and was compelled to seek terms for peace (986). Sebüktegin agreed to his request on the provision that Jayapala remit one million dirhams, relinquish fifty elephants, and surrender designated frontier fortressep. Nevertheless, Jayapala breached the accord immediately after the Ghaznavid forces retreated. Subsequently, Sebüktegin initiated an additional campaign into the Indian subcontinent. Despite forming an alliance with various other rulers and mobilizing a considerable army, Jayapala was once more defeated and subsequently relinquished all his territory located between Lamghan and Peshawar." Enver Konukçu, "Hinduşahiler", *DİA*, XVIII, p.117.

48 Mirhand, p.31 etc.

of Ghazni. Initially, he mobilized minor detachments to engage in harassment and attrition of the opposing forces, thereby disrupting their formation. At a time when the opposing army exhibited fatigue and disarray, Sebüktigin commanded a comprehensive offensive, culminating in a significant defeat of the Hindu forcep. After this triumph, Sebüktigin penetrated into India, seizing multiple towns and fortresses, thereby establishing complete dominion over the mountainous areas located to the east and north of Ghazni. This campaign also signified the expansion of Islamic authority along the Kabul River as far as Peshawar,[49] and undertook the region's first comprehensive process of Islamization (986–87). On the other hand, the Ghaznavids became assimilated into the region's prosperous trade networks and, beyond the fruits of booty, they gained substantial economic resources through the growing commercial activities in the area.[50]

In close proximity to the city of Kish, Sebüktegin came across the Samanid ruler Emir Nuh II, to whom he affirmed his allegiance and committed to providing support against their adversaries (976–977). Simultaneously, two significant figures of the Samanid state, Abu Ali Simjur and Faik, formed an alliance against Emir Nuh with the intention of capturing control over Bukhara. Encountering a challenging situation, Emir Nuh sought assistance from Sebüktegin. Sebüktegin, accompanied by his son Mahmud, promptly mobilized and progressed towards Herat,[51] where the rebels had gathered. Recognizing his inability to resist

[49] A city of historical significance situated in north-western Pakistan, Peshawar was probably established in the 5th century BCE by the Kushans under the designation Purushapura, located about 16 kilometres from the strategic Khyber Pasp. The area, historically populated by diverse Indo-Aryan tribes, was relinquished by Seleucus I Nicator—a successor to Alexander the Great—to Chandragupta Maurya (d. 296 BCE), the progenitor of the Mauryan Empire, subsequent to Alexander's expedition. During this time, Buddhism was disseminated in the region, and Purushapura became the capital of the Buddhist Gandhara Kingdom. Commencing in the 1st century BCE, with the migration of Pashtuns from the Suleiman Mountains towards the south and southwest, the city—along with Kabul and Kandahar—subsequently developed into one of the principal centres of Pashtun culture. Islam was disseminated in the region during the 4th century AH (10th century CE). Sebüktegin of the Ghaznavid dynasty extended his influence to Peshawar and effectively established the foundations of Islam in the area (376 AH / 986 CE). As Turkish influence in the region increased, the dissemination of Islam became prevalent among the Pashtun community. Azmi Özcan, "Peşaver", XXXIV, *DİA*, p.252-253.

[50] Utbi, p.8 etc; Mirhand, p.36-42; Merçil, "Gazneliler", p.481.

[51] Herat was a Khorasan city in the north-west of Afghanistan and today it remains within the borders of Afghanistan and is known by the same name. Herat, which was one of the major trade centres on the main road from the Mediterranean to India and China in the XIth



the Ghaznavid army, Abu Ali Simjur implored Sebüktegin to facilitate a reconciliation with Emir Nuh II. Emir Nuh consented to pardon Abu Ali and permit him to maintain his position, subject to the payment of fifteen million dirhamp. Nonetheless, Abu Ali's adherents contravened this accord, resulting in overt hostilities between the two factionp. Sebüktegin initiated a campaign against Abu Ali in the vicinity of Herat, and under the leadership of his son Mahmud, the Ghaznavid forces successfully engaged and defeated Abu Ali on October 23, 994. Upon arriving in Herat, Emir Nuh II conferred honorary titles and land grants to Sebüktegin and Mahmud, acknowledging their instrumental role in securing his throne. Sebüktegin was conferred the honorific "Nasir al-Din wa'd-Dunya" and was appointed to govern the regions of Balkh, Tokharistan, Bamiyan, and Ghor,[52] and Georgia, [53] while Mahmud was bestowed the title "Sayfal-Dawla" along with the governorship of Khorasan.[54]

century, had made a name in weaving, especially since the time of the Abbasids. According to Istahri and Ibn Hawqal, like other major cities of the period, it consisted of an inner fortress, city and outskirts. Refer to Yakut, V, p.396-397; Z. Velidi Togan, "Herat", *İA*, V/1, p.429; Recep Uslu, "Herat", *DİA*, XVII, p.215-216.

52 The mountainous region of Central Afghanistan east and south-east of Herat, south of Garjistan, and the lands around the Juzjan, Ferahrud, Herirud and Murgab rivers were called Gur. The Gurids or Shansabanids were an Islamic dynasty that ruled in Khorasan, Afghanistan and Northern India between 1000-1215. The emirs of Shensebani, who was the chief of a small tribe during the Ghaznavid rule, first established their political dominance over the Gur lands, then gradually expanded their sphere of influence and finally became a great power in the XIIth century. For more information, see Iqtidar Hussain Siddiqui, "Gurlular", *DİA*, XIV, p.207-211; M. Longworth Dames, "Gur", *İA*, IV, p.825; C.E. Bosworth, "The Early Islamic History of Ghor", *Central Asiatic Journal*, 6 (1961), p.116-133; C.E. Bosworth, "Ghurids", *EI*^{2}, II, Brill 1991, p.1099-1104.

53 Gharjistan referred to a region located to the west of Herat, east of Ghor, north of Marw al-Rudh, and south of Ghazni. The rulers of Gharjistan, a term signifying "the king's mountains and territory," were uniformly designated as Shar. In Persian, Shar denotes both "city" and various titles including lion, ilbegi, ilkhan, and sovereign. Gharjistan constituted a fortified area characterized by private gates and walls, wherein entry into the cities was prohibited without the authorization of the ruler. Its populace was distinguished by their commitment to justice and integrity. The area possessed two significant, well-irrigated, and productive urban centres: Afshin (alternatively referred to as Bishin) and Surmin (also spelled Shurmin). In addition to these two cities—characterized by rulers of comparable status—there existed another residential area known as Belkiyan (or Burukan), situated in a formidable mountainous region. For further information regarding Gharjistan and its condition during the Ghaznavid era, refer to the work of Izzatullah Zaki., "Garcistan Beyleri: Şar Ailesi", *USAD*, 15 (Autumn 2021), p.127-136.

54 Utbi, p.14-74; Mirhand, p.43-44; el-Cuzcani, p.28-29.

Mahmud entered Nishapur, the centre of Khorasan. However, because Abu Ali and Faik retaliated, he was compelled to retreat to Herat. This was most likely Mahmud's only defeat. Upon receiving news of his son Mahmud's failure, Sebüktegin made his way towards Tus.[55] On this occasion, Abu Ali, notwithstanding the assistance provided by his father, was unable to resist the assaults launched by Mahmud and suffered a defeat. Burdened by the conflict, Abu Ali and Faik aspired to re-establish amicable relations with Emir II. Nuh. Nevertheless, Abu Ali was apprehended, while Faik evaded capture and sought asylum with the Karakhanids. Faik urged the Karakhanid sovereign Nasr b. Ali to advance towards Bukhara. In reaction to Emir II. Nuh's plea for aid, Sebüktegin assembled a considerable military force. In response to this information, Nasr b. Ali suggested a pact with Sebüktegin directed against the Samanid State. Nonetheless, Sebüktegin upheld his commitment to Emir II. Nuh and rejected the proposition. Eventually, a treaty was finalized without resorting to armed conflict. As per this agreement, the Samanids relinquished control of the Syr Darya region, extending up to the Katvan Desert, to the Karakhanids. At the behest of Nasr b. Ali, Faik was designated as the governor of Samarkand. These events unequivocally illustrated Sebüktegin's substantial influence within the Samanid State.[56]

Following the establishment of an accord with the Karakhanids, Sebüktegin journeyed back to Balkh. According to one narrative, during his residency, he experienced profound grief due to the demise of one of his sisters and several close relatives, leading to illness and confinement to bed. Despite having relinquished hope of recovery owing to his illness, he implored to be transported to Ghazni, anticipating that its pristine air and potable water could facilitate the restoration of his health. He was positioned on a litter and commenced his journey towards Ghazni. Nevertheless, his aspirations proved to be futile. His condition deteriorated in proximity to the village of Madru Muy on the periphery of Balkh, and after traversing a few additional locations, he succumbed to his illness. He passed away in August 997, and his remains were transported to Ghazni for interment.[57]

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55 Tus is a city between Khorasan and Nishapur. Yakut, IV, p.49-50; V. Minorsky, "Tus", *İA*, XII/2, p.123-130.

56 Merçil, *Gazneliler Devleti Tarihi*, p.10.

57 Utbi, op.cit., p.11; İbnü'l-Esir, IX, p.108; el-Cuzcani, p.29; Kazvini, p.390) Nāṣir al-Dīn was severely ill and was subsequently confined to his bed. Despite experiencing a decline in his optimism for recovery owing to the severity of his condition, he implored to be transported to Ghazni, with the expectation that the city's pristine air and water might facilitate his healing. He was positioned in a litter and commenced his journey to Ghazni. Nevertheless, divine



Recognized historically by the honorific title Nasir al-Din and the epithet Emir-i Adil, Sebüktegin was a distinguished ruler esteemed by his contemporary kings and sultans, as well as cherished by his military and populace. He distinguished himself not only through his courage and military expertise but also through his contributions to administration, governance, and the domains of science, arts, and literature. Sebüktegin had cultivated himself in these areas and was well-known for his patronage of the sciences and the arts. Among his offspring, Hasan and Husayn died young, while Mahmud, Ismail, Nasr, and Yusuf survived. Sebüktegin diligently nurtured his offspring and authored a treatise to facilitate their efficacy as subsequent rulers. The work, entitled Pendname[58] (The Book of Advice), was penned in the handwriting of Ebu'l-Feth al-Busti[59], the secretary of the Di-

providence thwarted the fulfilment of his aspirations. He encountered death on his journey and was interred in Ghazni. In the concluding period of his life, Nāṣir al-Dīn commenced the development of an exceptionally artistic and unparalleled palace known as Sahlabad, engaging the most esteemed craftsmen for the endeavour and allocating substantial financial resources to the project. Nevertheless, following his demise, the palace remained unfinished. His sons, perceiving the endeavour as destined for failure, made no effort to complete it. Consequently, the majestic palace deteriorated into a state of disrepair, rendering the invested labour and financial resources effectively wasted. Poets like Bustī and others crafted elegies in remembrance of Nāṣir al-Dīn's passing, el-Utbi, p.74, 76. Nāṣir al-Dawla Sebüktigin passed away in the month of Shaʿbān, 387 AH (August–September 997 CE). His principal base was located in Balkh, where he constructed a variety of dwellings. He contracted an illness in Balkh, and his condition remained protracted. Intending to travel to Ghazni, he departed from Balkh; however, he perished during his journey. His remains were transported to Ghazni and interred at that location. His tenure extended for roughly two decades. He was a just and benevolent sovereign, committed to jihād, possessing unwavering faith, and exhibiting genuine courage and chivalry, characterized by his integrity and commitment to his pledges. May divine grace be bestowed upon his lineage. His polity persisted for a greater duration compared to those of the Samanids, Seljuks, and numerous other dynasties. His son, Maḥmūd, was the inaugural ruler to assume the title of Sultan; prior to him, this designation had not been used." İbnü'l-Esir, IX, p.108-109.

58 On the Pendnameh and other sources of the Ghaznavid period refer to Erkan Göksu, "Gazneliler Tarihinin Kaynakları", *Hindistan'da Kurulan Türk-İslam Devletlerinin Tarihi Kaynakları*, ed. Cihan Oruç, Bilgeoğuz Publishers, Istanbul 2022, p.43-84.

59 Abū'l-Fatḥ al-Bustī (d. 401/1010) was among the renowned poets and writers who lived at the end of the 4th century AH and the beginning of the Ghaznavid period. He was born in the city of Bust in present-day Afghanistan. In his youth, he received a rigorous education and studied ḥadīth. He served as secretary (munshī) and scribe to the Samanid ruler Nūḥ b. Manṣūr (366–387/977–997), as well as to the emir of Bust, Baytūz. After Nāṣir al-Dīn Sebüktigin captured Bust, Abū'l-Fatḥ entered his service and was appointed to the Dīwān al-Rasāʾil (Chancery). He remained in this position until Sebüktigin's death in 387/997 and continued in the same role during the early years of Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni's reign. Abū'l-Fatḥ al-Bustī composed poetry on divine unity (tawḥīd) and moral instruction (maʿārif), as

van-ı Resail. and stood as one of the earliest and most significant examples of the *siyasetname* tradition in the Turkic-Islamic world.[60]

Sultan Mahmud and the Rise of the Ghaznavids (998-1030)

At the time of Sebüktegin's passing, his sons occupied significant regional roles: Buğracık functioned as the governor of Herat, Nasr administered Büst, İsmail reigned over Ghazna and Balkh, and Mahmud held the position of military commander (sipahsalar) of Khorasan, headquartered in Nishapur. Prior to his demise, Sebüktegin appointed İsmail as his successor, prompting state officials and emirs to facilitate his coronation. İsmail declared his sovereignty in Balkh, and after the demise of Samanid Emir II. Nuh in 999, he committed his loyalty to II. Mansur ibn Nuh, who had succeeded to the Samanid throne. He conferred substantial benefits and presents upon the military personnel, presumably expecting that his brother Mahmud would reject his authority and potentially mobilize against him. To ensure the fidelity of the emirs and soldiers, İsmail disbursed numerous gifts to such an extent that he exhausted his father's treasury. During this period, Mahmud actively engaged in various endeavorp. Following the completion of the mourning and funerary rituals for their father, he requested the governorship of Ghazna in return for relinquishing the province of Balkh and the Khorasan emirate to İsmail, who was at that time in power. Ismail rejected this proposition. As a result, Mahmud mobilized his forces and proceeded towards Ghazna, while İsmail, advancing from Balkh to defend the city, prepared for combat. Mahmud dispatched emissaries again to demand the city's capitulation; however, İsmail remained intransigent. Ultimately, Mahmud emerged triumphant in the fraternal dispute. İsmail, after seeking refuge in Ghazna's fortress, eventually capitulated and was subsequently incarcerated in a castle. Consequently, after İsmail's short tenure, the throne of Ghazna was succeeded by Mahmud in March 998.[61]

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well as rhymed maxims of a proverbial nature. He left behind both an Arabic and a Persian dīwān. For further information, see. Mehmet Atalay, "Ebul-Feth el-Büsti'nin Kaside-i Nuniyye'sinin, Diyarbakırlı Said Paşa Tarafından Yapılan Türkçe Manzum Tercümesi", *A.Ü. Türkiyat Araştırmaları Enstitüsü Dergisi*, S.27 [Prof. Dr. Şinasi Tekin Özel Sayısı] (Erzurum 2005), p.145-154; M. Sadi Çöğenli, "Ebu'l-Feth eI-Büsti ve Ünvanü'l-Hikem Tercümesi", *Akademik Araştırmalar Dergisi*, 1/II (1999), p.121-131.

60 Utbi, p.74; İbnü'l-Esir, IX, p.108-109; Mirhand, p.44; Göksu, *Gazneliler (963-1186)*, p.34.

61 Utbi, p.81-83; İbnü'l-Esir, IX, p.109; Merçil, "Mahmud-ı Gaznevi", p.362.



Sultan Mahmud was born on November 2, 971, in Bukhara, and is renowned not only as one of the most famous rulers in the history of Ghaznavids but also as a critical figure in Turkish and Islamic history. His mother was affiliated with one of the distinguished noble families of the Zabulistan region in eastern Afghanistan, which encompasses Ghazna. Consequently, certain sources additionally denote him as Mahmud-i Zabuli.[62] From a young age, Mahmud obtained a distinguished education, successfully memorizing the Qur'an and engaging in the study of religious disciplines. Nevertheless, what genuinely set him apart was his proficiency in military matters and governance. Commencing his service in diverse governmental roles at a young age, he rapidly garnered the esteem of his father, Sebüktegin. During instances when Sebüktegin was required to depart from Ghazna, he designated Mahmud as his representative. Mahmud's significant achievements in aiding the Samanid Emir II. Nuh garnered him the designation of commander of the Khorasan armies (sipehsalar) and the esteemed honorific "Seyfü'd-devle."[63] Sebüktegin held great esteem for his son Mahmud's bravery and intellect; nonetheless, he occasionally expressed disapproval of Mahmud's intermittent opposition to his views and directives. At one juncture, influenced in part by specific conspirators, Sebüktegin incarcerated him within the Ghazna Fortress (990).[64] Nonetheless, these were transient times, and the discord between father and son did not intensify into significant conflict. Mahmud possessed profound reverence towards his father, Sebüktegin.[65]

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62 Erdoğan Merçil, "Mahmud-ı Gaznevi", *DİA*, XXVII, 2003, p.362; Nuhoğlu, *op.cit.*, p.6.

63 Utbi, p.14-74; Mirhand, p.43-44; el-Cuzcani, p.28-29; Merçil, "Mahmud-ı Gaznevi", p.362.

64 "After learning that Maḥmūd had been incarcerated in the fortress by his father's decree, Sebüktigin, the sovereign of India penned him a letter. In the letter, he encouraged Maḥmūd to revolt against his father, stating, "Come to me, and I will arrange your marriage and grant you dominion over a 12,000-farsakh region of India," while assuring him of complete support. Mahmud, however, reacted vehemently to the Indian monarch's endeavour to instigate conflict between him and his father. In a handwritten letter, he responded: "You cur!" What authority do you have to bestow upon me a kingdom? Indeed, my royal father is discontented with me for a brief period. However, when he is once more satisfied with me and offers his support, I will, empowered by the Almighty God and under the protection of my sovereign father, mobilise an army and confront you. I will capture you and insert straw into the outer covering of your cranium. I plan to construct a mosque in India and facilitate the delivery of the Friday sermon at that location. Şebankarei, "Gazneli Sultan Mahmud'un Karakteri", *Tarih Okulu*, trans. Ahmad Hesamipour, P.3 (Spring 2009), p.134.

65 Merçil, "Mahmud-ı Gaznevi", p.362; Mehmet Hanefi Palabıyık, *Gazneli Devleti Saray Teşkilatı*, (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis), Atatürk Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Erzurum 1996, p.22.



Upon assuming the throne, Mahmud dispatched an emissary to the Samanid Emir II. Mansur to convey recent developments and solicit the governorship of Khorasan. Nevertheless, II. Mansur had previously designated Begtüzün, a Samanid Turkish emir, as the governor of Khorasan. In reaction, Mahmud deployed a military force to Khorasan and progressed towards Nishapur. Alarmed, Begtüzün recognized his inability to oppose Mahmud and retreated to Nisa and Baverd, soliciting aid from Bukhara. II. Mansur and Faik, the governor of Samarkand, responded by providing assistance and establishing a camp in the vicinity of Sarakhs. Having become aware of their endorsement, Mahmud, recognizing II. Mansur as his sovereign, retreated without initiating combat. Begtüzün and Faik exhibited considerable apprehension regarding Mahmud and sought to prevent his influence over Emir II. Mansur. The pact between II. Mansur and Mahmud was deemed to be a grave threat and they sought to prevent it. They deposed II. Mansur by blinding him and throned II. Abdulmelik bin Nuh as his successor (February 999).[66]

This facilitated Mahmud's increased intervention in Khorasan. Assuming guardianship of the deposed II. Mansur, Mahmud mobilized against Faik and Begtüzün. The Samanid emirs sought refuge in Merv, prompting Mahmud to pursue them and establish his encampment beyond the city's confines. The peace negotiations commenced in that location yielded positive results; however, a segment of the military opposed the agreement, resulting in the recommencement of hostilities. In the aftermath of the subsequent confrontation, Mahmud successfully vanquished the Samanid army on May 16, 999. As a result, the Samanid forces collapsed, and II. Abdulmelik, who had sought refuge in Transoxiana, forfeited all his authority and influence. In reaction to, Karakhanid sovereign Ilig Nasr promptly mobilized his forces and advanced towards the Samanid capital, Bukhara. On October 23, 999, the Karakhanids seized the city and expelled members of the Samanid dynasty to Özkent.[67] Thus, the Samanid dynasty ultimately came to an end. Although Abu

[66] Utbi, p.87-88; Merçil, "Gazneliler", *Türkler*, p.862-863.

[67] "It was the capital city of the Karakhanid Empire and today it is located within the borders of Kyrgyzstan. It is located at an altitude of 1012 m above sea level on the right side of Karaderya in the southwest of Kyrgyzstan, very close to the border with Uzbekistan. The name of the city, which is written as Ozgön, Uzgen in today's Kyrgyz Turkish, is referred to as Yüzkent and sometimes as Özcent in Islamic historical sources. According to Divanü lugāti't-Türk, Ozkent is a name of Fergana town and means "the city of our essence". The Fergana Basin, in which Ozkent is located, has been one of the most important regions of Turkestan geography since the first periods of history. The Fergana region, which was recorded in ancient Chinese records under the name of Dayüan (big garden),



Ibrahim Ismail al-Muntasir attempted to rejuvenate the Samanid dynasty, he was ultimately unsuccessful, and the Samanid territories were divided between the Ghaznavids and the Karakhanids.[68]

The dissolution of the Samanid Emirate significantly converted the Ghaznavids—who had previously demonstrated allegiance to the Samanid emirs since their inception—into a completely independent state. Subsequent to these events, Sultan Mahmud dispatched a communication to the Abbasid Caliph al-Qadir billah[69] in Baghdad, declaring his loyalty to him. In response, the Caliph sent him a

was the homeland of the Wusuns during the Great Hun Empire. In time, it was connected to the Hunp. Then it was included in the borders of Akhun State. Later, it came under the sovereignty of the Turks and especially the Western Turkp. It was the scene of migrations of many Turkish tribes, especially the Karluks, and gained its main importance during the Karakhanids period." For comprehensive information see Ahmet Taşağıl, "Özkent", *DİA*, XXXIV, p.129-131.

68 Utbi, p.91; Nuhoğlu, *op.cit*., p.7; Merçil, "Gazneliler", p.863.

69 The Abbasid caliph Abū'l-ʿAbbās al-Qādir bi'llāh Aḥmad b. Isḥāq b. Jaʿfar al-ʿAbbāsī (991–1031) was born on 9 Rabīʿ al-Awwal 336 (28 September 947) in Baghdad. His mother, Dimna, was a slave concubine. He obtained a robust education from an early age and pursued the study of Shāfiʿī jurisprudence under the tutelage of Abū Bishr Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Harawī. Following his father's demise, he became enmeshed in an inheritance conflict with his sister and was reported to Caliph al-Ṭāʾiʿ li'llāh for allegedly attempting to seize the caliphate. Apprehensive about potential arrest, he sought refuge in Baghdad prior to escaping to Baṭīḥa, where he received protection from the governor Muhaḏḏib al-Dawla (379/989–90). He resided there for approximately three years and received considerable generosity. On 12 Ramaḍān 381 (22 November 991), in the wake of the deposition and apprehension of his cousin al-Ṭāʾiʿ by the Buyid ruler Bahāʾ al-Dawla, he was proclaimed caliph under the title al-Qādir bi'llāh. The distinguished poet al-Sharīf al-Raḍī lauded him in an extensive qaṣīda (Dīwān, I, 546). Throughout his rule, al-Qādir was subject to Buyid influence, conferring robes of honour and the title "Shāhanshāh" upon Bahāʾ al-Dawla. In exchange, Bahāʾ al-Dawla committed to loyalty and obedience, while the caliph reciprocated with an oath of mutual fidelity. Al-Qādir persisted in his position under the dominion of the Buyids throughout their line of succession. His rule signified a phase of deterioration for the Abbasid caliphate, characterized by a weakening of central authority, even within Baghdad. A major focus during his reign was the delivery of the Friday sermon (khuṭba) in his name throughout the Abbasid empire, particularly in reaction to Fatimid expansion and the actions of opportunistic local rulers. Upon his accession to the caliphate, even Mecca proclaimed the khuṭba in the name of the Fatimid caliph. Sultan Maḥmūd of Ghazna communicated to Baghdad via an envoy that he had implemented the khuṭba in the name of al-Qādir. In response, al-Qādir, pleased by this acknowledgment, dispatched to Maḥmūd a robe of honour, a crown, a banner, and a decree confirming his sovereignty. Maḥmūd consistently provided reports of his campaigns and triumphs to the caliph and sought firmans to legitimize his authority over recently acquired territories. During his reign, he recognized al-Qādir as his sovereign. Al-Qādir was additionally the first Abbasid caliph acknowledged by

crown, a robe of honor, a banner, and a formal decree as sovereign over his territoriep. He also honored him with the titles "Yamin al-Dawla" (Oath of the State) and "Amin al-Milla" (Trustee of the Nation) (November 999).[70] Elevated to complete independence with the endorsement of his sovereignty by the Abbasid Caliphate, Mahmud undertook the political and religious obligations of safeguarding and advancing Islam. Subsequent to establishing his authority in Khorasan and executing military operations in the peripheral territories of the Samanid State—namely Sistan, Guzgan, Chaghaniyan, Huttal, Khwarezm, and the Gur region—Mahmud's foremost aim was the Indian subcontinent. Upon being conferred the emblems of authority and presents from the Caliphal court, Mahmud pledged before the assembly to initiate annual campaigns against India with the intent to engage in conflict with non-believers. Shortly after resolving disturbances in Sistan and subsequently returning to Ghazni (999–1000), he embarked on a journey toward India.[71]

During his reign, Sultan Mahmud conducted a total of sixteen, and according to certain scholars, seventeen military expeditions to India. Undeniably, the economic prosperity of the Indian subcontinent substantially influenced the motivation behind these campaignp. Nevertheless, in opposition to assertions put forth especially by certain Western scholars, the exclusive objective of Mahmud's campaigns in India extended beyond mere plunder and loot. His principal aim was the safeguarding and advancement of Islam, a responsibility he genuinely embraced. Moreover, the rewards obtained from these jihads and conquests constituted a significant source of revenue for his troops, which consequently cultivated deep respect and loyalty towards Mahmud as their military commander.[72]

Sultan Mahmud's inaugural expedition to India occurred in either 999 or 1000, focusing on Lamghan, which is situated to the east of Kabul. Nevertheless, certain

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the Qarakhanids, whose currency featured his name. Mustafa Sabri Küçükaşcı, "Kadir-Billah", *DİA*, XXIV, p.127-128.

70 Utbi, p.94 ve Gerdizi'de p.381; "Yeminü'd-devle ve Eminü'l-mille", Hamdullah Müstevfi-i Kazvini'de "Eminü'd-devle" ve "Yeminü'l-mille", p.391. Also see Palabıyık, *Valilikten İmparatorluğa Gazneliler*, p.114 etc.; Barthold, *Moğol İstilasına Kadar Türkistan*, p.290 etc.; Merçil, *Gazneliler Devleti Tarihi*, p.15.

71 Bahattin Kök, "Gazneli Mahmut'la Abbasi Halifesi el-Kadir Arasındaki İlişkiler", *EKEV Akademi Dergisi*, I/2 (Mayıs 1988), p.120; Merçil, 1991, p.547-561.

72 For the Indian policy of the Ghaznavids, see. Erdoğan Merçil, "Gazneliler'in Hindistan Siyaseti", *Istanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Tarih Araştırmaları Dergisi*, [Prof. Dr. Bekir Kütükoğlu'na Armağan], Istanbul 1991, p.547-561.



scholars contend that Mahmud's first military campaign in India corresponds to the Peshawar Expedition of 1001–1002. In the course of this campaign against Caypal, the Hindu Shahi ruler, Mahmud acted expeditiously by initiating a surprise attack prior to Caypal's ability to mobilize a significant army, ultimately achieving victory in battle in November 1001. Subsequent to this triumph, Sultan Mahmud returned to Ghazni accompanied by substantial spoils and prisoners, receiving the prestigious designation of "Gazi" in 1002.[73] In 1004, during his third expedition, Mahmud seized Bhatiya and mandated the establishment of mosques and prayer facilities to disseminate Islam among the indigenous community. He further appointed a multitude of religious scholars to the area.

His fourth expedition in India was oriented toward Multan.[74] In 1005, Ebu'l-Feth Davud exhibited defiance against the Gaznelis and embraced the Qarmatian sect. In March/April 1006, Mahmud departed from Gazni, successfully subjugated the area, and reprimanded the Qarmatians residing there. Subsequently, he designated Suhpal (Nevasaşah), the Muslim grandson of Caypal, as the governor of Multan and then concluded his return.

The fifth Indian expedition was initiated in response to Suphal's (Nevasaşah) reversion to his former Hindu faith and his associations with various Indian rajap.

[73] İbnü'l-Esir, IX, p.244; Palabıyık, *Gazneli Devleti Saray Teşkilatı*, p.25.

[74] Multan is a historic city located in the Punjab region of present-day Pakistan. Situated on a plain east of the Chenab River—one of the tributaries of the Indus River—it lies along the route connecting the Indian subcontinent to Central Asia. Its recorded history begins in 326 BCE with the invasion of Alexander the Great. After the 5th century CE, the city came under the rule of the Hindu Rai dynasty. The Muslim conquest occurred in 94 AH (712 CE) when Muhammad ibn Qasim al-Thaqafi, the conqueror of Sindh, captured the city. By the mid-10th century, the geographer al-Istakhri noted that Multan was a prosperous city where locals and Muslims lived together peacefully. In 375 AH (985 CE), al-Maqdisi observed that Ismailis ruled the city and that the majority of the population was Shia, with the Fatimid caliph's name being recited in Friday sermons. Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni seized Multan after a seven-day siege in 396 AH (1006 CE), granting amnesty to all except the Ismailis. The city's ruler, the Qarmatian Abu'l-Futūḥ Dāwūd ibn Naṣr, fled to Serendib (Sri Lanka). Although Mahmud left the converted Hindu commander Suhpal in charge, Suhpal soon rebelled and apostatized. In response, Mahmud reconquered the city in 398 AH (1008 CE) and again in 400 AH (1010 CE) after Abu'l-Futūḥ retook it temporarily. Towards the end of the Ghaznavid period, the Ismailis occasionally attempted to regain control of Multan but failed to achieve lasting success. Ultimately, in 571 AH (1175–76 CE), Muʿizz al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Sām of the Ghurids established definitive Sunni dominance over the region. For more extensive information on Multan, see. Azmi Özcan, "Mültan", DİA, DİA, XXXI, p.548-549.

In this campaign, conducted in 1008, the Sultan successfully ambushed and defeated Suphal, subsequently incarcerating him within a fortresp. The Qarmatians faced additional repercussions, and consequently, a significant portion of Multan was seized during the expedition.

The sixth Indian expedition was initiated against Anandpal, the offspring of Caypal. Referred to as the Second Peshawar or Nagarkot campaign, this expedition was conducted in response to Anandpal's alliance with various local rulers in north-western India, aimed at countering the increasing influence of Islam in the Punjab region. Mahmud became aware of this in the midst of winter and, notwithstanding severe weather conditions, commenced his journey from Ghazni on December 31, 1008. In the subsequent conflict, the Indian army experienced a defeat. Furthermore, Nagarkot (Bhim Nagar) Fort, which served as a sanctuary for the retreating forces, was seized following a three-day siege in 1009.

The seventh Indian expedition was in October 1009, and focused on the significant commercial hub of Narin (Narayan). Acknowledging his inability to impede the progress of the Ghaznavids, Anandpal pursued a path of peaceful resolution. A peace treaty was established under the stipulations that Anandpal would render tribute and jizya, furnish a designated number of soldiers for the Sultan's service, and present him with elephants laden with giftp. Consequently, the trade route between India and Khorasan experienced a resurgence.

The eighth Indian expedition transpired in 1010, once more focusing on Multan. Sultan Mahmud entered the area without facing any opposition and subjugated the southern segment of Multan—which had remained untamed in earlier campaigns—under his authority.

The ninth Indian expedition occurred in 1014, targeting Trilochanpal, the sovereign of Naradin (Nandana). Following an intense conflict, the Naradin Fortress was seized. The Ghaznavid forces, in pursuit of the retreating ruler Trilochanpal, progressed as far as Kashmir.[75] During this period, additional territories were ac-

[75] The term describes a geographical area located in the northern section of the Indian subcontinent. In Arabic documents, it is referred to as Kashmīr or Kašmīr, while its name, derived from Sanskrit, is noted in Ptolemy's writings as Kaspeiria. The Chinese traveller Hiuen Tsang, who visited the region in 631, called it Kiashimilo. The local inhabitants identify the region as Kashir. Initially, Kashmir referred to a lush valley in the north-western Himalayas that measures 135 km in length and 32–40 km in width, but over the years, the term has expanded to include an area of 222,236 km². Of this total, 78,114 km² is governed by Pakistan, which includes 11,639 km² that makes up the province of Azad Kashmir (with a



quired. The Sultan mandated the establishment of mosques in the area and the selection of religious expertp. Subsequent to this expedition, the Abbasid Caliph al-Qadir Billah conferred upon Sultan Mahmud, in addition to his existing titles, the honorifics "Nizam al-Din" and "Nasir al-Haqq."

A year following the Naradin campaign, a substantial expedition was initiated toward Thanesar (Taneser), a city of considerable significance to Hindus, renowned for its possession of the large idol known as Chakrasvami and some of the era's most prominent temples (October 1014). The monarch Triloçanpal presented Sultan Mahmud with fifty elephants as a gesture of goodwill in return for the cessation of hostilities. Nonetheless, the Sultan declined and initiated a siege of Thanesar. Upon the ruler's departure, the residents of the city capitulated without opposition (1015). All the idols located within the city were annihilated. Only the idol referred to as Chakrasvami was transported to Ghazni and exhibited to the public.

In the same year (1015), Sultan Mahmud launched his eleventh campaign to India and marched against the King of Kashmir, who had aided Ruler Triloçanpal during the Naradin expedition. He besieged the Lokhot (Loharin) Fortress on the Kashmir route. However, due to the severe winter conditions, he was forced to retreat.

The twelfth expedition to India occurred in September 1018, with a focus on Kanauj. Sultan Mahmud and his Ghaznavid forces initially seized the fortress of Sarsawa, subsequently capturing the forts of Sirsawa and Mahaban. Consequently, the majority of the regions situated between the Jamuna (Yamuna) and Ganges rivers fell under Islamic governance. Thereafter, they seized Mathura, a city of profound religious significance deeply esteemed by Hindup. Persisting in their progression, the Ghaznavid forces arrived in Kanauj on December 20, 1018. Raja Rai Kapal successfully fled by traversing the Ganges River. Observing their sovereign abscond, the populace of the city yielded without opposition. In the interim, Raja Rai Kapal dispatched an envoy to Sultan Mahmud and successfully negotiated an accord with him. Subsequently, Sultan Mahmud advanced upon Raja

population of approximately 3,210,000 as recorded in 1998). Additionally, China controls another 42,685 km², and the portion administered by India is known as the state of Jammu and Kashmir, which spans 101,307 km² (with a population of 10.069.917, as recorded in 2001). The centre of Azad Kashmir is Muzaffarabad and the centre of Jammu and Kashmir is Srinagar." For more comprehensive information see "Keşmir", *DİA*, XXV, p.325-327.

Chandar Rai of Sharwa, culminating in his defeat as well. This campaign yielded a significant quantity of spoils for the Ghaznavids. The renowned Great Mosque of Ghazni (Gazne Ulu Camii), along with numerous other mosques, fountains, and philanthropic institutions, were constructed utilizing the resources obtained from this campaign.

Following the Ghaznavid army's withdrawal from the Kanauj campaign, the Hindu rulers assassinated Raja Rayapal of Kanauj, who opted for a peaceful relationship with Sultan Mahmud rather than offering resistance. In reaction to this occurrence, Sultan Mahmud initiated his thirteenth campaign in India in the year 1019. He encountered the forces of Trilochanpal in proximity to the Ramganga River (alternatively referred to as Ruhut). The Hindus held the conviction that the Ghaznavids would encounter insurmountable difficulties in traversing the river. Nevertheless, pursuant to the Sultan's directive, the Ghaznavid army traversed the river utilizing inflated animal hides, thereby astonishing and overpowering the Hindu forcep. The Ghaznavids seized numerous prisoners, elephants, and spoils in this region. Raja Ganda of Kalinjar, apprehensive about engaging with Mahmud who was poised for battle, ultimately took flight. The Ghaznavid forces intercepted him en route and initiated an immediate assault, resulting in significant casualties for Ganda's troopp. Nevertheless, Ganda awaited the onset of night and utilized the anonymity afforded by darkness to facilitate another escape. Despite the efforts of the Ghaznavids to pursue and eliminate the majority of Hindu soldiers encountered along the route, they were unsuccessful in apprehending Ganda.

The fourteenth military campaign in India was once more aimed at Kashmir (1021). Sultan Mahmud, who besieged the Lokhot Fortress, was compelled to abandon his efforts due to the arrival of winter.

In the fifteenth Indian campaign (1022), Sultan Mahmud once more confronted the Kalincar raja Ganda. He initially advanced to Gevaliyar (Gwalior) and subsequently proceeded to Kalincar. When the Gevaliyar raja Arcan opted for peace instead of conflict, his plea was granted under the stipulation that he furnish a specified number of elephants and recognize the sovereignty of the Ghaznavid state. Ganda was cognizant of his inability to withstand the Ghaznavid forces. He committed to providing tribute in the form of three hundred elephants and an annual



tax, thereby acknowledging the suzerainty of Sultan Mahmud. Subsequently, in 1023, Sultan Mahmud returned to Ghazni.[76]

The most important aspect of Sultan Mahmud's campaigns in India was the Somnat (Sumenat)[77] expedition undertaken between 1024 and 1026. Somnat, the city that housed the idol Lat, whose name translates to "Moon God," was esteemed by Hindus as the most significant and sacred deity. The populace ascribed Sultan Mahmud's victories in India and his obliteration of various idols to the curse of Lat inflicted upon those objects of worship. Upon hearing these rumors, Sultan Mahmud sought to refute the validity of the Hindu faith to the population of India. Commencing his journey from Ghazni in October 1024, Sultan Mahmud initially advanced towards Multan, where he provisioned his troops, before continuing onward to the vast expanse of the Great Thar (Rajputana) Desert. The Ghaznavid military, notwithstanding considerable challenges in traversing the desert, successfully seized the fortress of Ladorya. Following an arduous and protracted journey, they arrived at Somnath. On Friday, January 7, 1025, Sultan Mahmud issued the directive to initiate an attack. Notwithstanding the opposition from the Hindus, the Ghaznavid forces escalated the siege and ultimately achieved dominance. The Hindus progressively began to relinquish their fortifications. In response to this observation, Ghaznavid soldiers ascended the walls, infiltrated the city, and promptly seized both the fortress and the temple that housed Lat. Sultan Mahmud entered the temple of Lat and instructed a muezzin to ascend and recite the adhan (Islamic call to prayer). He ordered that this substantial stone idol be taken from its location and fragmented into four pieces. Two of these pieces were placed in front of the doors of the Great Mosque and the Sultan's palace in Ghazni, while the other two were sent to Mecca and Medina.[78] During this period, the capture of

[76] For collective information about the Indian expeditions, see Neslihan Durak, *Hindistân'a Kuzeyden Yapılan Seferler*, Ankara 2000; Hanefi Palabıyık, "Gaznelilerin Hindistan Seferleri", *EKEV Akademi Dergisi*, XI/32 (2007), p.139-152; Palabıyık, *Gazneli Devleti Saray Teşkilatı*, p.22-24; Merçil, *Gazneliler Devleti Tarihi*, p.17-27; Göksu, *Gazneliler (963-1186)*, p.41-47.

[77] "Somnath, a revered temple and port city in India, was a fortified stronghold and vital port for ships navigating the Middle East-China maritime route. With ten thousand villages dedicated to the temple, it served a thousand Brahmins, 350 male choristers, and 500 female dancers. The temple housed the famous linga, a sacred phallic symbol, and was believed to be the most powerful deity in India. The raid on Somnath by Mahmud of Ghazni is often attributed to this religious symbolism."

[78] el-Utbi, p.191-193.

Somnath and the acquisition of the temple containing Lat, considered the largest and most revered deity in India, generated considerable enthusiasm across the Islamic world. Subsequent to this triumph, which garnered Sultan Mahmud significant acclaim, the Abbasid Caliph al-Qadir Billah dispatched congratulatory correspondence to him. Additionally, the Caliph bestowed upon Sultan Mahmud the distinguished title "Kahf al-Dawla wa'l-Islam," and similarly conferred titles upon his sons: to Emir Masud, "Shihab al-Dawla wa Jamal al-Milla"; to Emir Muhammad, "Jalal al-Dawla wa Jamal al-Milla"; and to Emir Yusuf, "'Adud al-Dawla" and "Mu'ayyad al-Milla.'"[79]

In 1027, Sultan Mahmud executed his seventeenth and concluding campaign in India, targeting the Jats who had assaulted his forces during their retreat following the Somnath expedition. The Sultan ordered the construction of 1,400 vessels in opposition to the Jats, who commanded a fleet of 4,000 ships. He strategically positioned sharp spikes on each vessel to facilitate the destruction of enemy boats, thereby securing a distinct advantage and inflicting a significant defeat on the Jatp.[80]

The political and military endeavours of Sultan Mahmud extended beyond the campaigns in India. He maintained political and military relations with contemporary Islamic dynasties, particularly the Karakhanidp. Prior to the Indian campaigns, Sultan Mahmud deemed it essential to establish a peaceful accord with the Karakhanids. Consequently, an accord was reached by the two statep. Pursuant to this agreement, the Amu Darya River was established as the boundary between the two nationp. Several years following the agreement's ratification, the Karakhanid sovereign Nasr b. Ali, capitalizing on Mahmud's presence in India, initiated an effort to capture Khorasan. Nevertheless, Sultan Mahmud successfully repelled the Karakhanid forces from Khorasan in 1006. Following this setback, Nasr b. Ali, in pursuit of assistance from the Karakhanid Great Khan, Yusuf Qadir Khan, once more embarked on an expedition towards Khorasan. Nevertheless, Mahmud of Ghazni once more triumphed over the Karakhanid forces in the vicinity of Balkh in December 1007. Numerous additional conflicts ensued between the two nationp. Nevertheless, as conflicts over the throne commenced within the Karakhanid dynasty, Yusuf Qadir Khan sought to establish a pact with Sultan Mahmud. The two

[79] Utbi, p.116-117; Merçil, *Gazneliler Devleti Tarihi*, p.28; Nuhoğlu, *op.cit.*, p.8; Kök, *op.cit.*, p.123.

[80] Merçil, *Gazneliler Devleti Tarihi*, p.17.



Turkish rulers met near Samarkand, debated the matters of Iran and Turan, and reached an agreement (1025).[81]

During the meeting, Yusuf Qadir Khan warned Sultan Mahmud about the Seljuks, who had emerged as an influential power in Transoxiana at the time, and their leader Arslan Yabghu.[82] Subsequently, Sultan Mahmud dispatched a missive to Arslan Yabghu, summoning him to his presence. Arslan Yabghu embarked on a journey to engage with the Sultan, accompanied by his son Kutalmish and a contingent of three hundred individualp. The Sultan received Arslan Yabghu and his delegation with due respect and hosted a banquet in their honor. Nevertheless, during the banquet, recognizing from the words and actions of Arslan Yabghu that he might constitute a threat, the Sultan ordered the arrest and imprisonment of Arslan Yabghu and his retinue in the fortress of Kalancher, situated near the border of Multan (1025).[83] After being imprisoned in the fortress of Kalancher for seven years, Arslan Yabghu passed away in 1032. The rulership of the Seljuk Turkmens

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81 el-Cuzcani, p.57-59; er-Ravendî, I, p.86; Reşidü'd-din Fazlullah, *Cami'ü't-Tevarih (Zikr-i Tarih-i Al-i Selçuk)*, Turkish trans. Erkan Göksu-H. Hüseyin Güneş, Bilge Kültür Sanat Publishers, Istanbul 2014, p.73.

82 "During a peace agreement with Sultan Mahmud, a representative warned him about the powerful Terakime Turks from Turkistan who had settled in Nur Bukhara and Sogd of Samarkand. They had taken control of pastures, grazing lands, and formed a well-organized army. Their tribes and cavalry had grown in strength. The representative feared unrest if they set out on a campaign towards India, potentially leading to fitna (sedition) and conflict. To prevent this, the representative sought their loyalty, sought support, and demanded a hostage from their leaders." Reşidü'd-din, p.52.

83 Arslan Yabghu, a skilled archer, met Sultan Mahmud during a banquet and claimed to have the ability to supply 30,000 horsemen with a bow and three arrowp. He claimed to have the capability to raise 100,000 mounted warriors with one bow and three arrowp. However, Sultan Mahmud was impressed and cautious, believing that Yabghu could raise such an army without pay or reward. After consulting with his advisors, Yabghu and his retinue were arrested and imprisoned in Kalinjar Fortress near the border of Multan. Yabghu's confidence in his abilities and ability to raise an army without pay or reward was a significant factor in his imprisonment. Beyhaki, *Tarih-i Beyhaki*, I-II, nşr. Said Nefisi, Tahran 1352, p.876-877; Reşidü'd-din, *Cami'ü't-Tevarih* (Zikr-i Tarih-i Al-i Selçuk), p.75-79; İbnü'l-Esir, IX, p.292; er-Ravendi, *Rahatü's-Sudur ve Ayetü's-Sürur*, I, Türkçe trans. Ahmet Ateş, TTK Publishers, Ankara 1999, p.88-90; el-Cuzcani, p.57-60; Hamdullah Müstevfi-i Kazvini, *Tarih-i Güzide*, p.427. Although the number given here is exaggerated, it is important in terms of being one of the examples showing that the bow was used as a symbol of metbu, and the arrow as a symbol of subordination and invitation within the Turkish state tradition and understanding of sovereignty. On the place of the bow and arrow in the Turkish state tradition and understanding of sovereignty, see Erkan Göksu, "Ok ve Yayın Türk Devlet Geleneği ve Hakimiyet Anlayışındaki Yeri", *Turkish Studies/Türkoloji Araştırmaları, (International*

then passed to Tughrul and Chaghri Beg. Nevertheless, certain Turkmen factions loyal to Arslan Yabghu refused to acknowledge their authority, subsequently crossing the Amu Darya and establishing themselves in Khorasan in 1028. These Turkmens, referred to as the Yabghulular, commenced a migration from Khorasan that reached Iran, Iraq, Azerbaijan, northern Syria, and Anatolia.[84]

Khwarazm was among the territories where Sultan Mahmud engaged in various activities. Mahmud of Ghazni meticulously observed the regional developments and initiated a campaign against Urgench in response to the prevailing unrest, subsequently integrating the territory directly into the Ghaznavid State (1017). Likewise, in order to deter incursions into Ghaznavid territories originating from the Ghur region, he conducted military campaigns in Ghur in 1010/11 and 1020. In 1012, Sultan Mahmud incorporated the area of Garchistan into the Ghaznavid State, and in 1029, he seized Ray from the Buyids, subsequently assigning its administration to his son Masud. Through his Indian campaigns and various military-political endeavors, Sultan Mahmud attained considerable renown across the Islamic sphere and cultivated amicable relations with the Abbasid caliphs. The Abbasid caliph al-Qadir Billah notably endorsed his endeavors in ghaza and jihad by bestowing titles upon Sultan Mahmud and presenting him with gifts. Nevertheless, following a period of time, these positive relationships deteriorated. Convinced that the Ghaznavids had engaged with the Shiite Fatimid caliph, al-Qadir Billah altered his position regarding Mahmud in 1023. Despite his power and autonomy, Sultan Mahmud exhibited unwavering allegiance to the Sunni Abbasid caliph, continuing to issue coinage inscribed with the caliph's name and forwarding a portion of the spoils and gifts acquired from his military campaigns to Baghdad.[85]

Sultan Mahmud passed away in Ghazni on April 30, 1030, at the age of fifty-nine. He bequeathed an empire that extended from the Caspian Sea to Transoxiana, and subsequently reached the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean. His administrative skills, political insight, and extraordinary achievements spanning a large geographical region secured him a distinguished reputation within the narrative of Turkic-Islamic civilization. At the time of his demise, Ghaznavid territories spanned from Azerbaijan in the western region to the Upper Ganges Valley in India in the eastern region,

Periodical For The Languages, Literature and History of Turkish or Turkic), V/2, [Yeni Türk Edebiyatının Kaynakları II], (2010), p.986-1011.

84 Osman Turan, *Selçuklular Zamanında Türkiye*, Istanbul 2004, p.33-45; Ahmet Ateş, "Yabgulular Meselesi", *Belleten*, XXIX/115 (1965), p.517-525; Sefer Solmaz, "Selçuklu Tarihini Derinden Etkileyen Bir Olay: Selçuklu-Yabgulu Mücadelesi", *SÜ Türkiyat Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 35 (2014), p.545-575.

85 Göksu, *Gazneliler (963-1186)*, p.50; Nuhoğlu, *op.cit*., p.10.



and from Khwarazm in the northern region to the coasts of the Indian Ocean in the southern region. N. A. Baloch assessed his period in the following manner:

> He was a distinguished leader and one of the most renowned generals in historical accounts. Concurrently, he functioned as a diligent and rigorous administrator. As a significant supporter of scientific endeavours, he demonstrated remarkable generosity towards researchers. He was a true statesman and a tolerant ruler who attempted to reconcile with the Indians and to unify them under his administration and political system. He minted. coins emblazoned with symbols from Sanskrit lore and incorporated Indians not only in civil roles but also within his military. He enlisted them into the armed forces. In Ghazni, Indian units operating under their respective commanders formed a considerable component of the Sultan's military. Through his adaptable leadership during both wartime and peacetime, the Sultan successfully established an extensive empire that extended from Iraq and the Caspian Sea to the Ganges River, and from the Aral Sea and the Samarkand area to the Indian Ocean. During the reign of Sultan Mahmud, the Indo-Ghaznavid territories, encompassing the entirety of the Peshawar region and all of Punjab—were structured into four significant administrative provinces or regions, with their respective capitals located in Peshawar, Nandana, Lahore, and Multan, all subject to the governance of Ghazni. The jurisdiction of the governor of Lahore encompassed regions beyond Eastern Punjab, reaching as far as the Ganges basin, which included Kalinjar. During the concluding years of Sultan Mahmud's rule, Grand Vizier Hasan Maymandi was relieved of his duties and exiled to Kalinjar, where he resided until the ascension of Sultan Masud to the throne. The perimeters of these Indo-Ghaznavid colonies were additionally broadened by Mahmud's successors through the acquisition of adjacent territories.[86]

> Sultan Mahmud, an exceptionally successful ruler and great commander, was also renowned for his piety, intelligence, foresight, prudence, justice, and the importance he placed on scholars. These qualities earned him praise both during his lifetime and in subsequent eras, with scholars and poets lauding him and Persian literature portraying him as an emblem of justice and fairness. During his reign, the Ghaznavid court patronized numerous scholars and artists. Among them were Firdausi, Unsuri, Farrukhi-i Sistani, and Asjadi. According to one tradition, Firdausi traveled to Ghazni to present his work, the Shahnameh—one of the most significant masterpieces of Iranian literature—to Sultan Mahmud. Likewise, the renowned scholar al-Biruni spent many years at the Ghaznavid court and composed his work Tahqiq ma li'l-Hind during this period.[87]

86 Göksu, *Gazneliler (963-1186)*, p.51.

87 Göksu, *Gazneliler (963-1186)*, p.52.

Rise and Fall: The Era of Sultan Masud (1030–1044)

Sultan Mahmud had five offspring. His eldest son, Masud, was an extraordinarily valiant, courageous, and competent prince. Consequently, Sultan Mahmud proclaimed him crown prince in the year 1116 and appointed him to govern Herat. He had appointed him as governor. During this time, Masud executed numerous successful campaigns, notably focusing on the region of Ghur (1020). When Sultan Mahmud wrested Rayy and Jibal from the Buyids, he assigned the governance of these regions to Masud (1029).[88] Shortly thereafter, Masud seized Hamadan and Isfahan from the Buyids, thereby extending the dominion under his authority (1030). While Sultan Mahmud was gratified by these achievements, Masud's insubordination in specific issues and his obstinate disposition began to concern him. Prior to his demise, Sultan Mahmud partitioned the governance of his empire between Masud and his son, Muhammad. Significant territories such as Ghazni, Khurasan, Balkh, and northern India were allocated to Muhammad, whereas newly acquired and unstable areas including Rayy, Isfahan, and Jibal were entrusted to Masʿud. He subsequently requested that both sons take an oath to adhere to this division. Masʿud, perceiving this arrangement as inequitable, was unable to overtly oppose his father; however, he did not refrain from articulating his discontent in the company of specific court officials. Sultan Mahmud, who already possessed misgivings about Masud, became further displeased upon hearing these statements. Consequently, he altered his perspective regarding the succession and formally excluded Masud from the line of inheritance, designating Muhammad as his new heir.[89]

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88 Nuhoğlu, op. cit., p.10.

89 Sultan Mahmud was known for his preference for his son Muhammad over his other child, Masud. He often reprimanded Masud while holding Muhammad in higher regard. His favouritism was evident as he even instructed that the caliphal decree (manshūr) from Baghdad prioritize Muhammad's name and titles over those of Masud. According to Khwāja Abū Naṣr al-Mushkān's account: "When this manshūr was announced in Mahmud's court, it cast a shadow of sorrow on our hearts and the hearts of all the nobles present. Masud's forehead displayed the true marks of sovereignty and greatness." After departing from his father's presence, Masud was approached by al-Mushkān, who expressed, "O Prince! We the servants were profoundly disheartened that your honourable title was mentioned after Muhammad's in the decree." Masud responded, "Do not let it trouble you. It is said that the sword reveals the truth more effectively than texts." When al-Mushkān returned, informants alerted Sultan Mahmud that he had followed Masud and conversed with him. Mahmud called upon al-Mushkān and interrogated him about their discussion. Fearing for his own safety, he divulged the entire exchange. Upon hearing it, Sultan Mahmud stated, "I understand that in all aspects, Masud surpasses Muhammad. Following my death, the realm



After Sultan Mahmud's death, the Ghaznavid statesmen honored the late sultan's last wishes by inviting Muhammad, who was in Balkh at the time, to Ghazni and placing him on the throne.[90] Nonetheless, Masud, residing in Isfahan, declined to acknowledge Muhammad's sultanate. Leaving Isfahan en route to Ray, Masud dispatched a communication to his brother Muhammad, declaring, "I make no claim to the province that was bequeathed to you by our father." The area of Jibal-Tabaristan, which I previously subdued through armed conflict, suffices for my needs. Nevertheless, I desire that my name be prominently featured in the Friday sermon (khutbah)." Muhammad vehemently opposed this proposition and commenced preparations for military action against him. Subsequently, Masud arrived in Ray and then Nishapur, where he obtained the backing of significant Ghaznavid officials and military leaders, established a partnership with the Karakhanid sovereign Ali Tegin, and ultimately received the acknowledgment of his claim to the throne from the caliph al-Qadir Billah. In light of these advancements, Masud embarked on his journey towards Ghazni. Fully cognizant of the presence of Masud sympathizers within his own military, Muhammad extended substantial charitable contributions[91] to his soldiers and secured their loyalty and oath to oppose Masud before marching his army against him.[92]

Muhammad arrived in Tekinabad on September 2, 1030, signifying the beginning of the month of Ramadan. He remained in that location during the holy month and observed Eid. However, on October 4, 1030, shortly after the festivities, a group of emirs within his army, supporting Masud, instigated a revolt. They apprehended Muhammad and detained him at Kuhdiz Fortress. The insurgents articulated the circumstances to Masud through a written communication. On June 2, 1031, Masud arrived in Ghazni, where he was greeted with enthusiasm and officially inaugurated as the sovereign. He ordered that his brother Muhammad be

shall be entrusted to Masud. As for poor Muhammad, I made this request merely to afford him some respect and advantage during my lifetime, for after my passing, he will wield no influence." el-Cuzcani, p.38-39.

90 Mirhand, p.130.

91 Nuhoğlu, *op.cit.*, p.11. It was a state tradition for the sultans who ascended to the throne to distribute the jülus gratuity to the soldiers, emirs and other people. On this subject, see M. Hanefi Palabıyık, *Valilikten İmparatorluğa Gazneliler (Devlet ve Saray Teşkilatı),* Ankara 2002, p.97.

92 Mirhand, p.132-133; Merçil, "Mesud b. Mahmud-ı Gaznevi", *DİA*, XXIX, p.347.

blinded and dispatched him to the fortress of Mandesh, situated to the east of Ghor. Thus commenced the rule of Masud I over the Ghaznavid throne.[93]

During this period, significant developments were taking place in Transoxiana, Khorasan, and Khwarezm. In particular, the increasing power and influence of the Seljuks posed an ever-growing threat to the Ghaznavids. Meanwhile, unrest also broke out in Kirman, which was under the rule of the Buyids, prompting Masud to send an army to intervene. At the same time, while contending with his brother, Masud did not want to neglect his alliance with the Karakhanid Ali Tegin. Ali Tegin, who represented a major danger to the Ghaznavids, was attempting to coordinate actions with the Seljuks. Closely observing these developments, Masud designated the Ghaznavid governor of Khwarezm, Khwarezmshah Altuntas, to engage with Ali Tegin. Altuntas engaged in conflict with Ali Tegin at Debusiyah; notwithstanding significant injuries, he managed to achieve peace with him in 1032. Not long after, Altuntas succumbed to his injuries in Debusiyah. Masud subsequently designated Altuntas' son, Harun, to administer Khwarezm, yet associated him with his own son, Said, to whom he conferred the title of Khwarezmshah. Dissatisfied with this arrangement, Harun declined to acknowledge Ghaznavid sovereignty and commenced independent actions. Nevertheless, he was shortly thereafter assassinated, and his sibling Ismail succeeded him as the ruler of Khwarezm.[94]

Concurrently, disturbances also arose in the Indian territories. Certain state officials, apprehensive regarding Ahmed Yinaltegin's increasing influence subsequent to his successful campaigns in the region, communicated with Sultan Masud, informing him that while Yinaltegin had amassed considerable wealth through his conquests in India, only a minimal fraction of the spoils was being dispatched to Ghazni. In response to these grievances, Sultan Masud sent the Ghaznavid emir Tilak to confront him. Tilak successfully vanquished Ahmed Yinaltegin in 1034. Following this victory, Sultan Masud chose his son Mawdud as the governor of the area. Subsequently, he resolved to spearhead a campaign into India. Notwithstanding attempts by certain seasoned officials to dissuade him, emphasizing notably the instability in the western regions of the state, particularly Khorasan, Sultan Masud proceeded to march towards India on October 6, 1037. Following the capture of the fortress of Hansi on December 31, 1037, he proceeded towards Somnat and Rampur, ultimately returning to Ghazni on February 11, 1038. Nonetheless,

[93] el-Cuzcani, p.32-35; Mirhand, p.132-134; İbnü'l-Esir, IX, p.308; Nuhoğlu, *op.cit.*, p.11.

[94] el-Cuzcani, p.63-64.



during his tenure in India, the circumstances in Khorasan had become progressively turbulent, with the challenges posed by the Turkmens and the Seljuks jeopardizing the Ghaznavid dominion over the area.[95]

Indeed, the integration of the Seljuk Turkmens into the Ghaznavid objectives transpired during the reign of Sultan Mahmud in 1025. Sultan Mahmud had granted permission to specific Turkmen groups, headed by leaders such as Yağmur, Göktaş, Boğa, and Kızıl, to establish settlements in Khorasan, provided they maintained allegiance to the Ghaznavids. Nonetheless, Sultan Masud, notwithstanding the admonitions of the seasoned vizier Ahmed Maymindi Taş Ferraş, commanded the apprehension and execution of these Turkmen leaders.[96] This circumstance resulted in the Turkmens developing significant animosity towards the Ghaznavidp. In the interim, leveraging the disorder instigated by the Turkmens, Khwarezmshah Harun proclaimed independence and endeavored to secure support from Ali Tegin and the Seljuk dynasty. Moreover, Tughril and Chaghri Beg, prominent figures among the Seljuk Turkmens, arrived in Khwarezm at the invitation of Khwarezmshah Altuntap. Nevertheless, subsequent to the assassination

95 Göksu, *Gazneliler (963-1186)*, p.37.

96 In 1025, during the reign of Sultan Mahmud, a group of Turkmens, headed by begs named Yağmur, Boğa, Göktaş and Kızıl and numbering 4000 households according to Gerdîzî, asked Sultan Mahmud for permission to cross the Ceyhûn, It is known that Arslan Jāzib, the governor of Tūs, pointed out the troubles that would arise from them and suggested to the Sultan that he should not give them permission, and if permission was to be given, he suggested that their thumbs should be "cut off" to prevent them from using bows and arrows, or that they should be drowned in the Ceyhûn River in order to keep them under control. However, this proposal was rejected by Sultan Mahmûd with the words "You are hard-hearted; how can I do what you say to these Muslims who have not committed any crime" and he allowed the Turkmens to cross the Ceyhûn. The sources record that Sultan Mahmud granted this because of his greed for wealth. el-Cuzcani, p.12-13; Gerdizi, p.411; İbnü'l-Esîr, IX, p.363; el-Hüseyni, *Ahbarü'd-Devleti's-Selçukiyye*, trans. Necati Lugal, TTK Publishers, Ankara 1999, p.2; el-Bundari, *Zübdetü'n-Nusre ve Nuhbetü'l-Usre*, trans. Kıvameddin Burslan, *Irak ve Horasan Selçukluları Tarihi*, Ankara 1999, p.3; Reşidü'd-dîn, p.80; Kazvini, p.427. The reason for Arslan Jazib's proposal to cut off the Turkmen's thumbs was as follows: In traditional Turkish archery, the arrow is drawn with the thumb and this technique is called "thumb draw". In this technique, an archer's ring, also called "zihgîr", was worn on the thumb. This technique had significant advantages, especially in terms of rapid shooting, i.e. shooting a large number of arrows one after the other in a very short time, and accuracy. Arslan Jâzib's proposal to cut off the thumbs of Seljuk Turkmens in order to prevent them from shooting arrows was based on this. For more information, see Erkan Göksu, Okla Yükselen Millet, Okçular Vakfı Publications Istanbul 2018.

of Harun, as orchestrated by Sultan Masud, they recognized their inability to persist in the region and, as a result, migrated to Khorasan. [97]

The arrival of the Seljuk Turkmens in Khorasan in 1035 signified the commencement of a sequence of significant historical occurrences that would directly affect the Ghaznavids. Despite the acknowledgment of this phenomenon by notable Ghaznavid officials of the era, who subsequently issued admonitions regarding the Seljuks, Sultan Masud remained predominantly oriented towards matters concerning India. Furthermore, possessing confidence in himself and his forces, he regarded the Seljuk Turkmens with a lack of seriousness. Nevertheless, this disposition proved detrimental to the Ghaznavids. Between 1035 and 1040, the forces he sent to dominate the Seljuks were unsuccessful in achieving their objective, culminating in a notable defeat at Nisa in 1035. Meanwhile, Sultan Masud had already decided to march on India on October 6, 1037.[98] Following the capture of Hansi Fortress and subsequently Rampur, Sultan Masud returned to Ghazni on February 11, 1038, and dispatched a new military force under the leadership of Hajib Subashi to confront the Seljuks at Nishapur. Nonetheless, the Ghaznavid forces experienced another defeat at the hands of the Seljuks near Talhab, in proximity to Serahs (May 1038). In the aftermath of this conflict, the Ghaznavid influence over Khorasan experienced a notable decline, while the Seljuks progressively assumed control in their stead. Acknowledging his error, Sultan Masud resolved to spearhead a campaign against the Seljuks himself. He relocated from Ghazni to Balkh and triumphed over Chaghri Bey and his Turkmen troops at Ulyaabad on April 6, 1039. Subsequently, leading a force of 50,000 soldiers, he once more engaged the Seljuks, this time achieving a victory at the Battle of the Serahs desert (June 27, 1039). Despite the interim peace agreement concluded between the Ghaznavids and the Seljuks following these occurrences, the matter remained unresolved. In

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97 el-Cuzcani, p.63-64; Mirhand, *Ravzatu's-Safa fi Sireti'l-Enbiya ve'l-Müluk ve'l-Hulefa (Tabaka-i Selçukiyye)*, trans. Erkan Göksu, TTK Publishers, Ankara 2015, p.38-40.

98 The rationale for Sultan Masud's expedition to India can be summarized as follows: During the month of Ṣafar in the year 428 AH (corresponding to November–December 1036 CE), he developed meningitis. During his illness, he pledged that should he recover, he would undertake a military campaign (ghazā) against the non-believers in India and seize the fortress of Hansi, which had previously remained unconquered. Despite the resistance from numerous commanders who cited the significant instability in Khorasan induced by the Seljuks, Masud declined to follow their advice. He deployed military forces towards Hansi, laid siege to the fortress, and successfully seized it during Rabīʿ al-Awwal 429 AH (January–February 1038 CE). el-Hüseyni, , p.4; er-Ravendi, I, p.96; el-Cuzcani, p.39, 67-68.



order to fully resolve the Seljuk issue, Sultan Masud departed from Herat on November 9, 1039, accompanied by a substantial military force. Nevertheless, the Seljuks, primarily constituted of light cavalry, exhibited reluctance to confront the heavily armored Ghaznavid troops and their war elephants in direct combat. Conversely, they eschewed direct engagement, promptly withdrawing whenever the Ghaznavid army advanced, while persistently ambushing them with long-range arrow fire. The Ghaznavid troops experienced significant adversities due to this incessant assault. Furthermore, the Seljuks intentionally disrupted water sources, grazing areas, and supply lines utilized by the Ghaznavid army, transforming the campaign into a protracted conflict characterized by endurance, patience, and psychological stresp. When the Seljuks assessed that the Ghaznavid army had been adequately weakened, they commenced hostilities on May 22, 1040, with engagements between the advance units extending over a three-day period. During this period, the Seljuks eschewed a comprehensive conflict, opting instead to monitor the Ghaznavid forces through the arid landscape devoid of water, causing attrition through persistent arrow fire. On May 23, as the arid and fatigued Ghaznavid forces approached Dandanakan Fortress, the Seljuks augmented their offensive, recognizing the strategic advantage. On May 24, 1040, as the Ghaznavids arrived at Dandanakan in a state of distress, the Seljuks initiated a comprehensive offensive. The Ghaznavid soldiers, experiencing severe dehydration and fatigue, disintegrated their battle formation. At the peak of the conflict, roughly 370 palace ghulams defected to the Seljuks, significantly altering the trajectory of the battle. Incapacitated by exhaustion and dehydration, the Ghaznavid army disintegrated, prompting Sultan Masud to retreat in an effort to preserve his life.[99] Consequently,

[99] When the Sultan saw that his forces were scattered all over, and that he was alone, he took control. He mounted an elephant and fled toward Faryab and Panjdeh. No horse could bear the weight of him with his weapons and gear, and only with great difficulty could an elephant bear such a burden, hence why he rode one. All the treasures, goods, and belongings were left behind. A few Turkmen pursued Mes'ud. When they approached, he dismounted the elephant and mounted a horse. Striking with his mace, he struck down the horseman. He killed him along with his small horse. Every cavalry group that arrived thereafter was struck with awe and terror by his Rustam-like blows. In particular, one said to Mes'ud: "O Lord! How does defeat suit one who deals such blows in battle, and how can he abandon his realm and leave it behind?" Mes'ud replied: "O brave one! Though my strike is such, my fortune has ended. God's decree does not depend on human rationale." Rešīdü'd-Dīn, p. 91.

the Ghaznavid control over Khorasan concluded, and the Seljuks ascended as the new governing authorities of the area.[100]

Following his defeat at the Battle of Dandanakan, Masud arrived in Ghazni on June 21, 1040, subsequently continuing his journey toward India. Subsequent to traversing the Sind (Indus) River, indications of insubordination began to emerge within his military forces. Despite Sultan Masud having traversed the river, his treasury remained situated on the other bank. Utilizing this circumstance, Turkish and Indian ghulams commenced the expropriation of the treasury. Subsequently, they approached Masud's brother, the former Sultan Muhammad, and declared him the new Sultan. Despite initially attempting to reject the assertion, Muhammad was ultimately obliged to concede to it owing to the persistence and intimidation employed by the ghulams (December 21, 1040).[101] The ghulams traversed the river in service of the new Sultan Muhammad and engaged in combat against Masud. Unable to withstand their advance, Masud withdrew and sought sanctuary in a proximate ribat (fortified outpost). Nevertheless, he was ultimately apprehended and presented before his brother, Muhammad, the former sultan. Muhammad conveyed to Masud, "I have no desire for your execution. Select a locale where you may establish a residence and live with your harem and children." Masud selected the Giri Fortress, and Muhammad dispatched him there accompanied by his inner circle.[102] He likewise designated a contingent of guards to supervise him. It is reported that upon Masud's arrival at the fortress, he sought from his brother a specified sum of money (or goods) to meet his expenses and requirements throughout his sojourn. Muhammad reluctantly dispatched five hundred dirhams. Masud, weeping, said: "Yesterday, there was a treasury under my control holding thirty thousand donkey loads (harvars) of wealth. Currently, I do not have even one dirham. O individuals

[100] According to Beyhaki, the Battle of Dandanakan took place on 7 Ramadan 431 AH (21 May 1040); according to al-Husayni, on 8 Ramadan 431, Thursday (22 May 1040); according to al-Juzjani, on 9 Ramadan 431 (24 May 1040); according to Rashid al-Din, during the year 429 AH (1037–1038); according to al-Bundari, in 430 AH (1038–1039); according to Ibn al-Athir, in 431 AH (1040–1041); and according to Hamdallah Mustawfi of Qazvin, it occurred in 432 AH (1041–1042). Refer to Beyhaki, II, p.938; el-Hüseyni, p.9; el-Cuzcani, p.73; Reşidü'd-din, p.90; el-Bundari, p.5; İbnü'l-Esir, IX, p.368-369; Kazvini, p.428. For more colletive information see Erkan Göksu, *"Batı Türk Devletini (Türkiye) Kuran Savaş: Dandanakan" Türk'ün Türk'le Savaşı*, Kronik Kitap, Istanbul 2023, p.140-163.

[101] Merçil, "Mesud b. Mahmud-ı Gaznevi", p.347.; Nuhoğlu, *op.cit*., p.21; Palabıyık, *Gazneli Devleti Saray Teşkilatı*, p.27.

[102] Mirhand, p.140.



with wisdom, pay attention. The individual who provided him with five hundred dirhams bestowed upon Masud one thousand dinars from personal resources, and this act of generosity emerged as the foundation of his contentment.[103]

When Muhammad lost most of his eyesight, governance passed to his son Ahmed. However, Ahmed's reign was short-lived. Ahmed was mentally ill and concocted the idea of killing his uncle Masud. Without consulting his father Muhammad or asking for his permission, Ahmed with the son of Yusuf b. Sebüktegin and the son of Ali-i Hişavend, went to Giri Fortress where Masud was imprisoned. Masud was secretly killed by his own nephew Ahmed on January 17, 1041.[104]

Sultan Masud was a strong and courageous ruler, a fact he proved through his heroic feats in battle. Under his reign, the Ghaznavid state expanded to its greatest territorial extent and became a large and respected empire. However, he lacked the necessary wisdom and knowledge in governance. Despite being guided towards the right path, his stubborn insistence on erroneous ideas led both the state and himself towards ruin. After the Ghaznavids' defeat against the Seljuks during his reign, they never regained their former strength and power.[105]

The Reign of Sultan Mawdud (1041–1049)

Prior to Sultan Masud's departure for India, he dispatched his son Mawdud to Balkh to confront the Seljuks. Nevertheless, when Mawdud was unable to secure dominance over the Seljuks, he withdrew to Hubyan. Prior to Sultan Masud's expedition to India, he had dispatched his son Mawdud to Balkh to engage with the Seljuks. When Mawdud was unable to secure an advantage over the Seljuks, he withdrew to the town of Hubyan, where he received news of his father's assassination and the succession of his uncle Muhammad to the throne. Initially motivated by the desire to avenge his father's death, Mawdud, guided by the counsel of his vizier Ahmed bin Abdussamed, resolved to travel to Ghazni first. Following the necessary preparations, he advanced towards his uncle Muhammad, who was stationed in Peshawar. On April 8, 1041, Mawdud was victorious in the battle at Jalalabad (Dunpur). He executed his uncle Muhammad, Muhammad's son

[103] Mirhand, p.140.

[104] Mirhand, p.141; Palabıyık, *Gazneli Devleti Saray Teşkilatı*, p.27; Nuhoğlu, *op.cit*., p.23.

[105] For more information about the Sultan Masud period, see Ahmet Yılmaz, *Sultan I. Mesut Devri Gazneliler Tarihi (1030-1041)*, Istanbul 2021.

Ahmed, Hadim Anushtegin al-Balkhi, Ibn Ali Hishawand, as well as all individuals implicated in the capture and incarceration of his father. Except for Abdurrahim[106], who had opposed the acts against Masud, Mawdud also killed all of his uncle's sonp. Indeed, he ordered the construction of a village and a ribat at the site of the battle, naming the settlement Fethabad.[107]

In the interim, his sibling Mawdud proclaimed himself sultan and commenced a journey toward Ghazni through Lahore. Nonetheless, during his residency in Lahore, he was discovered deceased in his tent on August 11, 1041. Consequently, Mawdud was devoid of any competitors and emerged as the exclusive sovereign of the Ghaznavid throne. His primary focus was to persist in the conflict against the Seljuks. During the years 1041 and 1042, he twice dispatched military forces to Sistan in an effort to regain control of the area from the Seljuks; however, his endeavours proved to be unsuccessful. Subsequently, he sent his sons Mahmud and Mansur to quell uprisings in India. Having reclaimed control in Peshawar and Lahore, Mawdud reinstated Ghaznavid dominance in India. He subsequently recommenced his campaign against the Seljuks, leveraging Chaghri Bey's illness to reclaim Herat and Termez. Nevertheless, this achievement proved transient, as the forces dispatched to Khorasan were vanquished by Malik Alp Arslan, the son of Chaghri Bey (August 1043). In the interim, the Seljuk emir Ertash mobilized a substantial army and progressed from Sistan towards Ghazni during the years 1045–1046. Despite the failure of his campaign, the Ghaznavids frequently encountered difficulties in securing substantial victories against the Seljuks. This circumstance drove Mawdud to seek partnerships for joint efforts against the Seljuks.[108] Following the establishment of an alliance with Ebu Kalicar of the Karakhanid and Kakuyid dynasties, Mawdud departed from Ghazni to rendezvous with

[106] "The reason for his salvation was this: When Masud was imprisoned, Abdurrahman and Abdurrahim, the sons of his brother, went to see him. 'Abd al-Rahman stretched out his hand and took Masud's cap from his head. Then Abdurrahim took it from Abdurrahman's hand and put it back on his uncle's head. He reproached Abdurrahman and cursed him. Only this decent behaviour saved him from death. Mirhand, p.144.

[107] İbnü'l-Esir, IX, p.372-373; el-Cuzcani, p 36; Palabıyık, *Gazneli Devleti Saray Teşkilatı*, p.27.

[108] Mevdud wrote letters to the rulers and emirs of various provinces, calling upon them to provide military assistance and promising them great wealth in return. He also pledged to grant them cities and towns in Khorasan according to their rank. The governor of Isfahan, Abu Kalincar, was among those who accepted Mevdud's offer. He gathered his troops and entered the desert, but many were lost, and eventually, he himself fell ill and returned. One of these was the Turkic ruler Hakan. He went to Termez, where he devastated and plundered



them in Balkh. Nevertheless, he became ill during his journey and was compelled to return to his capital. He developed a grave ailment referred to as kulunç, which proved incurable, and died on December 18, 1049.[109]

Following the passing of Sultan Mawdud, the Ghaznavid throne experienced a rapid transition. Initially, Mawdud's son, Masud II (1049), followed by Ali, the son of Masud I (1049–1050), and then Abdurreshid, the son of Mahmud (1050–1052), assumed the throne. Among these individuals, Masud II, the son of Mawdud, was descended from the daughter of Çağrı Bey. At the time of his accession to the throne, he was merely five years of age. Subsequently, statesmen and emirs removed him from power and installed Ali, son of Masud I, in his stead (December 29, 1049). Ali's brief rule was characterized by ambiguity and disorder. The ensuing discord between the military and the civilian population precipitated renewed challenges to the Ghaznavid throne. Sultan Mawdud's vizier, Abdurrezzak al-Meymendi, ordered the release of Abdurreshid, the son of Sultan Mahmud, who had been previously incarcerated by Mawdud, from prison and instructed the soldiers to pledge their loyalty to him.[110] Abdurreshid, arrived in Ghazna with this army and came to the throne in place of Ali ibn Masud (January 24, 1050).[111]

While the instability within the Ghaznavid State somewhat diminished with Abdurreshid's ascent to the throne, and some victories were attained against the Hindus and Seljuks, the challenges and adversities encountered by the Ghaznavids remained prevalent throughout this era.[112] Following the exceptional treachery that transpired in 1052, Abdürreshid's reign devolved into a comprehensive ca-

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the area, confiscating the property of the local inhabitants. Another group from Transoxiana marched against Khwarezm. İbnü'l-Esir, IX, p.424.

109 el-Cuzcani, p.40-41; Nuhoğlu, *op.cit*., p.23; Merçil, *Gazneliler Devleti Tarihi*, p.79; Merçil, "Gazneliler", p.482.

110 "When Mawdud ascended the throne, he had his uncle Abd al-Rashid arrested and imprisoned in the Meydin fortress, located along the Bust road. At the time of Mawdud's death, his vizier had come near this fortresp. Abd al-Rashid descended from the fortress and approached the soldiers, calling on them to pledge allegiance to him. They accepted, and together they returned to Ghazni. As they neared the city, Ali ibn Masud fled. Thus, Abd al-Rashid gained control of Ghazni and ascended the throne. He was given the title "Shams al-Dinillah Sayf al-Dawla," or according to another account, "Jamal al-Dawla." With Mawdud's death, it is said that God delivered Dawud (Chagri Beg) from Mawdud's harm." İbnü'l-Esir, IX, p.424.

111 el-Cuzcani, p.41; İbnü'l-Esir, IX, p.424; Merçil, *Gazneliler Devleti Tarihi*, p.79.

112 Mirhand, p.149; Nuhoğlu, op. cit., p.23; Palabıyık, *Gazneli Devleti Saray Teşkilatı*, p.27.

tastrophe. This act of treachery was perpetrated by Tughrul Bozan, a prominent commander in the Ghaznavid army.[113] Tughrul Bozan seized the throne by assassinating Sultan Abdurreshid and eleven princes from the royal family.[114] However, this betrayal, which nearly brought the Ghaznavid dynasty to its demise,

[113] Mawdud, the nephew of Abd al-Rashid, had a highly regarded chamberlain by the name of Tughrul, who was so valued that he was referred to by name and even married to Mawdud's sister. Following Mawdud's passing and Abd al-Rashid's rise to power, Tughrul was reinstated in a significant role as Ḥājib al-ḥujjāb or Chief Chamberlain. Tughrul urged Abd al-Rashid to initiate a campaign against the Oghuz Turks to expel them from Khorasan, but the sultan hesitated, deeming the region too far away. However, after Tughrul's insistence, he was eventually dispatched with a thousand cavalry. Tughrul advanced towards Sistan, where Abu'l-Fazl was overseeing affairs as Yabghu's representative. He commenced a siege of Tak Fortress and sent a message to Abu'l-Fazl, demanding he recognize Abd al-Rashid's supremacy. Abu'l-Fazl responded, stating, "I serve as Yabghu's deputy; betraying him is neither righteous nor honourable. Engage him in battle. Should you prevail, I will yield the fortresp." Tughrul maintained the siege for forty days without success in capturing the fortress. Concurrently, Abu'l-Fazl alerted Yabghu of Tughrul's manoeuvres through a letter. In response, Yabghu advanced toward Sistan to expel Tughrul. Exhausted from the prolonged siege, Tughrul also made his way toward Sistan. Upon approaching within a farsakh (approximately 5–6 km), he set an ambush at a concealed spot, anticipating a chance to attack. Suddenly, the sound of drums and trumpets caught his attention. He inquired from a passerby about the disturbance and learned that Yabghu had arrived in Sistan. Tughrul rallied his men and proclaimed, "We must either fight or face a noble death under the bladep. Our limited forces leave no option for retreat. " He and his men emerged from concealment. Upon sighting them, Yabghu inquired from Abu'l-Fazl about their identity, to which he answered that they were Tughrul's troopp. Recognizing their small numbers, Yabghu sent a minor contingent against them. Nevertheless, Tughrul refrained from direct combat; instead, he crossed a river on horseback and unexpectedly attacked Yabghu's troops, defeating them and claiming their possessions as war treasurep. He then charged at the next group, routing them as well. Yabghu and Abu'l-Fazl retreated towards Herat. Tughrul pursued them for about two farsakhs before returning to secure Sistan. He then wrote to Abd al-Rashid, detailing the events and requesting reinforcements for an incursion into Khorasan. Abd al-Rashid dispatched a substantial cavalry force to provide support. Tughrul welcomed these reinforcements and gained control over the surrounding areas of the province. During this period, he consulted with his closest advisors regarding Abd al-Rashid, and they unanimously supported his ambitionp. Consequently, Tughrul resolved to eliminate Abd al-Rashid and his lineage, marching on Ghazni where he assassinated Abd al-Rashid along with the heirs of Sultan Mahmud who had fallen into his grasp. (1052). Refer to İbnü'l-Esir, IX, p.441-442; el-Cuzcani, p.43-44; Mirhand, p.151-152.

[114] "Two of Masud's princes resided in Bergund Fortress. One was Ibrahim and the other Farrukhzad. The cursed Tughrul had dispatched a squad to Bergund Fortress with the intention of executing them. However, a fort commander (kutval) present there postponed the execution. He instructed the group to wait outside the fortress and commanded them to come back the following day. Just as they were on the verge of fulfilling that nefarious order, messengers unexpectedly arrived, delivering the news of Tughrul's death." el-Cuzcani, p.43-44;



also sealed Tughrul's own fate. Another Ghaznavid commander, Nushtigin, along with other military leaders, orchestrated an assassination that eliminated Tughrul. Described in sources as a "blasphemer and accursed," Tughrul Bozan's head was placed on the tip of a spear and paraded through the streets of Ghazni.[115] Subsequently, Farrukhzad, one of the few surviving members of the dynasty, was enthroned (March 13, 1052).[116]

Taking advantage of the chaos on the Ghaznavid throne, Chaghri Beg marched on Ghazna. However, the Ghaznavid army, commanded by the Ghaznavid emir Hirhiz, defeated the Seljuks near Bust. In response, Farrukhzad mobilized a new army against the Seljuks to reestablish Ghaznavid control over Khorasan. This Ghaznavid force then defeated the Seljuks in Tokharistan, capturing many prisonerp. Nevertheless, Melik Alp Arslan, with the consent of his father Chaghri Beg, advanced on Ghazna. This campaign ended with a peace agreement between the Ghaznavids and the Seljukp. Farrukhzad remained on the throne for a while longer after this agreement until his death on April 4, 1059.[117]

The Reign of Sultan Ibrahim (1059-1099)

Farrukhzad was succeeded to the throne by his brother Ibrahim.[118] During the reign of Sultan Ibrahim, who was around 26 years old, the long-standing turbulence ended and the Ghaznavid State flourished. His first task was to propose a treaty to Chaghri Beg, which aimed to end to the protracted Ghaznavid-Seljuk conflicts (1059).[119] However, the cordial relations between the two states declined

Kazım Paydaş, "Bilge Bir Hükümdar Gazneli Sultan İbrahim b. Mesud (450-492/1059-1099)", *The Journal of Academic Social Science Studies*, VI/5 (Mayıs 2013), p.458.

115 Vural Öntürk, "Gaznelilerde Bir Şehzade Düşmanı: Hacibü'l-Hüccab Tuğrul Bozan", *Yüzüncü Yıl Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, 36 (2017), p.345-361.

116 el-Cuzcani, p.44; Palabıyık, *Gazneli Devleti Saray Teşkilatı*, p.28.

117 İbnü'l-Esir, IX, p.443, X, p.25; Göksu, *Gazneliler (963-1186)*, p.68.

118 Ibrahim was detained for some time at Bergund Fortress following Farrukhzad's accession to the throne. He was later sent to Ajiristan, which is in the western part of Ghazni, close to the Arghandab and Helmand river sources, and was given the Nay Fortress. It was well known that Ghaznavid princes were closely watched in this citadel. el-Cuzcani, p.41, 46; Paydaş, *op.cit*., p.458; Nuhoğlu, *op.cit.*, p.24.

119 In 451 AH (1059–1060 CE), a peace accord was reached between Sultan Ibrahim and Dawud ibn Mika'il ibn Seljuk, the governor of Khorasan. The prominent leaders from both factions contemplated the situation and acknowledged that neither could successfully invade

after the death of Sultan Alp Arslan on November 24, 1072. The subsequent internal dynastic disputes that endured until and beyond the accession of Melikshah motivated numerous Seljuk emirs and meliks, including Sultan Ibrahim. After an extended period of tranquillity, Ibrahim mobilized an army targeting the Seljuks, aiming to recover previously held Ghaznavid territories in the vicinity of Tokharistan, Badakhshan, Balkh, Kunduz, Walwaliq, and Talekan. During Melikshah's engagement in subduing the rebellion led by Kavurt Bey in January-February 1073, Sultan Ibrahim dispatched a considerable Ghaznavid army to Chigilkent (also referred to as Sakalkent), which was then administered by Melikshah's uncle, Osman, who bore the title Emiru'l-Umera. Incapable of resisting the Ghaznavid forces, Osman was captured along with his entourage. In reaction to these developments, Sultan Melikshah not only deployed an army to confront the Ghaznavids but also embarked on a personal campaign. After becoming aware of this information, Ibrahim promptly ordered Osman's release. Nevertheless, following the suppression of Kavurt's insurrection, Melikshah proceeded towards Ghazna. However, he subsequently altered his plan and retreated, establishing an encampment at Isfizar.[120] Taking advantage of this opportunity, Ibrahim again presented a

the other's dominion. Resources were being squandered, armies were becoming drained, homes were plundered, and lives were lost. Understanding the consequences of ongoing battles, both parties focused their efforts on establishing peace. Ultimately, a consensus was formed, and a formal treaty was composed. The stipulations dictated that each ruler would maintain control over the lands they currently owned, while also agreeing to end all hostilities and territorial disputes. The delineation between their areas of authority was defined by the Hindukush Mountains in northern Afghanistan. The accomplished historian Abu'l-Fazl Bayhaqi wrote the treaty, which, with minor disruptions, endured for nearly fifty years. İbnü'l-Esir, X, p.26; Paydaş, *op.cit*., p.459; Palabıyık, *Gazneli Devleti Saray Teşkilatı*, p.28; Nuhoğlu, *op.cit.*, p.24.

120 "According to tradition, Sultan Melikshah's unexpected termination of his campaign and subsequent return were attributed to a strategic deception orchestrated by Ibrahim of the Ghaznavids. Recognizing his inability to confront Melikshah militarily, Ibrahim devised a strategic subterfuge. He possessed correspondence prepared and directed toward Melikshah's commanders. These letters state: Your efforts to motivate Melikshah to visit this region were commendable. Now, endeavour to expedite his arrival so that we may completely divest ourselves of his presence. If you achieve success, I will augment your wages and salaries, as well as bestow upon you all a plethora of gifts and rewards. He subsequently entrusted these letters to an operative, directing him to intentionally allow himself to be apprehended by the Seljuk forces. Ibrahim communicated to him: Melikshah frequently engages in hunting activities; when he does, seek an opportunity to be presented before him during the hunt. During that period, Melikshah was engaged in hunting activities in the vicinity of Isfizar. Upon the spy's arrival in the region, he was in fact apprehended by Seljuk soldiers. During interrogation, the spy disclosed the letters. Dreading treachery among his own forces,



treaty. The accord reached in 1073-1074 facilitated the restoration of relations between the Ghaznavids and Seljuks. To fortify the partnership between the two dynasties, a matrimonial alliance was formed.[121] After thus overcoming the Seljuk threat in the west, Ibrahim turned his attention eastward toward India. There, he achieved several successes and captured fortresses, bringing the Gur region under his control.[122]

Sultan Ibrahim, who ruled over the Ghaznavid State for nearly four decades, passed away on August 25, 1099. He was an accomplished ruler who, following an extended duration, ushered in an era of prosperity for the Ghaznavids. He was the first to incorporate the designation "Sultan" on Ghaznavid coinage. Sources characterize him as a highly intelligent, equitable, compassionate, and generous sovereign, deeply esteemed by fellow regional sultans, meliks, and emirs, particularly the Seljuks. According to one tradition, he traversed the streets of Ghazni himself, providing sustenance and financial assistance to those in need, while also utilizing treasury funds to meet the medical costs of the ill. Furthermore, evidence suggests that he was a proficient calligrapher who annually transcribed a Qur'anic manuscript, which he dispatched to Mecca accompanied by a variety of commodities. It is also speculated that he penned a composition entitled Desturü'l-vüzera. Moreover, Sultan Ibrahim supported scholars, poets, and literary figures; revitalized cities ravaged by succession disputes; founded new settlements including

Melikshah grew apprehensive and, without seeking counsel from his commanders, unexpectedly terminated the campaign and retreated." Mirhand, p.159-160; el-Cuzcani, p.42.

121 The Ghaznavid sovereign, keen to leverage his recent achievements, promptly took action. In an effort to secure a durable peace with Sultan Melikshah, he sent an embassy to the Seljuk court. Leading the Ghaznavid diplomatic delegation was Mihtar Rashid, who conveyed a variety of gifts from the Ghaznavid sovereign. The gifts included exquisite and opulent apparel transported by camels, along with one hundred donkey-loads of exceptional "elephant pears" sourced from areas adjacent to Ghazni, such as Shabar, Lamghan, Kamar, and Nugh. The delegation further showcased remarkable fauna, such as a hawk-like avian species, parrots, peacocks, ostriches, monkeys, and notably, an elephant. In addition to these provisions, the Ghaznavid emissary suggested a strategic marital alliance between the two dynasties. He sought the consent of Sultan Melikshah for his daughter's marriage to the son of Sultan Ibrahim. Melikshah endorsed the proposition and facilitated the marriage of his daughter, recognized by the designation Mehdü'l-Iraq and bearing the name Gawhar Malik, to Masud ibn Ibrahim. She received this designation as a result of her transfer from Rayy to Ghazni. To honour the matrimony and the princess's transition to her husband's domain, Nizam al-Mulk allocated one hundred thousand dinars from the public treasury to support the wedding and her procession. Paydaş, *op.cit*., p.462.

122 Mirhand, p.157; Merçil, "Gazneliler", p.482.

Hayrabad and Eymenabad; and commissioned a multitude of khanqahs, ribats, mosques, and madrasas.[123]

The Seljuk Shadow Lurking over the Ghaznavid Throne

Masud succeeded Sultan Ibrahim and was wed to Mehd-i Irak, the daughter of Sultan Melikşah and sibling of Sanjar. During the rule of Masud III, owing to the sustained peace with the Seljuks, advancements in conquests in India were achieved. An army dispatched under the leadership of his son Shirzad conducted conquests in Lahore. An additional army, under the command of chamberlain Togantegin, traversed the Ganges River and engaged in jihad within India, an accomplishment previously unmatched by any military force except that of Sultan Mahmud. Masud, referred to as Celalü'd-devle, was esteemed as a benevolent, equitable, munificent, and efficacious leader, resembling his father in character. Consequently, he was referred to as Masud-i Kerim, which translates to Masud the benevolent. Throughout his rule, state matters were systematized, and burdensome or exorbitant taxes levied on the populace in the Ghaznavid dominion and Zabulistan were eliminated.[124]

After the passing of Masud III died in February-March 1115, the dynastic throne struggles continued. His son Shirzad, came to the throne, but was opposed by his brother Arslanshah, who rebelled and subsequently dethroned him. Shirzad fled Ghazni and sought refuge in Tabaristan with Alauddawla Ali b. Shahriyar of the Bavandid dynasty. During his time there, Shirzad relinquished involvement in both worldly and royal matters and expressed his intention to undertake the pilgrimage to Mecca. Alauddawla Ali b. Shahriyar provided for all his necessities to facilitate the completion of the Hajj. Upon concluding his pilgrimage, Shirzad sought to regain the throne; however, he was unsuccessful and was subsequently

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123 Mirhand, p.160; İbnü'l-Esir, X, p.150-151; Merçil, "Gazneliler", p.482; Nuhoğlu, *op.cit.*, p.24.

124 Mirhand, p.161. "Upon the death of Ibrahim, his son Masud succeeded him. His nickname was "Jalal al-din". His father had married him to the daughter of Sultan Malik Shah. Nizam al-Mulk took out one hundred thousand dinars from the treasury on the occasion of this wedding and sending the bride to the groom's country." Ibn al-Asir, X, p.151; "Sultan Sanjar's sister Mahd-i Iraq was in his marriage. They called him Masud-i Kerim (open-handed, generous Masud). He was a sultan with good morals, blessed time, admired qualities, just and merciful. He became sultan during the reign of Caliph al-Mustazhir-billah." el-Cuzcani, p.24, 48.



executed by Sultan Arslanshah in February 1116.[125] This circumstance was met with disapproval by Sultan Sanjar, the Seljuk sovereign of Khorasan. Sanjar initially dispatched Emir Üner to confront the Ghaznavids and subsequently led a personal expedition to Ghazni. Recognizing his inability to resist, Arslanshah made multiple efforts to negotiate peace and impede Sanjar's campaign towards Ghazni; however, these endeavours proved unsuccessful. Subsequently, Arslanshah committed the error of dispatching an army to engage Sanjar. Following the subjugation of Arslanshah's forces, Sanjar entered Ghazni on February 25, 1117.[126] Sanjar appointed Arslanshah's brother, Bahramshah, in his stead following Arslanshah's flight to India, and negotiated an agreement with him. As stipulated in this agreement, Bahramshah would ascend to the position of sole ruler of the Ghaznavid throne; the Friday sermon (khutbah) in Ghazni would be delivered in the sequence of the Caliph, Sultan Muhammad, Malik Sanjar, and subsequently Bahramshah; furthermore, Bahramshah would be obligated to pay tribute to Sanjar, and a Seljuk official (amil) would be designated in Ghazni to supervise this payment.[127]

Bahramshah's ascendance to the Ghaznavid throne with the endorsement of Sanjar represented a noteworthy and unprecedented evolution for both the Ghaznavid and Seljuk dynastiep. This occurrence effectively placed the Ghaznavid state under the authority of the Seljuk Empire. Furthermore, before this instance, no Seljuk malik or sultan had ventured into Ghazni, nor had the khutbah been recited in honour of any individual from the Seljuk dynasty in Ghazni. While Malikshah had considered launching an offensive against Ghazni on numerous occasions, he ultimately abstained from such action upon the advice of Nizam al-Mulk. Consequently, these developments in Ghazni were of substantial significance to the Seljukp. Furthermore, Sanjar, who held the title of Malik of Khorasan, arrived in Khorasan accompanied by a wealth of spoils and merchandise, which served to augment his reputation through this achievement.[128]

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125 Kazvini, p.400.

126 Sanjar resided in Ghazni for a period of forty days, and following Bahramshah's consolidation of his position on the throne, he journeyed back to Khorasan. Prior to this, no Friday sermon (khutbah) had been delivered in Ghazni in the name of a Seljuk sultan. Despite Sultan Malikshah's considerable power and extensive domain, he never made an effort to capture Ghazni. Whenever he contemplated taking such action, Nizam al-Mulk would intervene to dissuade him. İbnü'l-Esîr, X, p.404.

127 el-Cuzcani, p.46; Mirhand, p.162-163; İbnü'l-Esir, X, p.401-404; Nuhoğlu, *op.cit.*, p.25; Palabıyık, *Gazneli Devleti Saray Teşkilatı*, p.29.

128 Göksu, *Gazneliler (963-1186)*, p.76-77.

The Period of Demise

Soon after committing fratricide and executing his brother Arslanşah[129], Bahramshah, who served as the Ghaznavid governor of India, encountered a rebellion orchestrated by Muhammad Abu Halim, who had previously aligned with Arslanşah during the recent succession dispute.[130] Sultan Bahramshah advanced towards India at the head of a substantial army and vanquished Muhammad Abu Halim in the vicinity of Lahore on January 11, 1119. He granted amnesty to the apprehended Muhammad Abu Halim and reinstated him as the governor of India. Nevertheless, Muhammad Abu Halim initiated another rebellion shortly thereafter,

[129] After his defeat, Arslanshah fled to India with a small group of followers. Upon learning of Sanjar's return to Khorasan, he also returned to Ghazni. Behramshah retreated to Bamiyan and informed Sanjar of the situation. Sanjar sent reinforcements to aid him. Meanwhile, after entering Ghazni, Arslanshah stayed there for a while before marching against his brother Behramshah. However, by that time, Sanjar's army had arrived and joined Behramshah. Both Arslanshah and his men were unable to confront the Seljuk forces once again, as they feared another direct clash. The Ghaznavid and Seljuk troops pursuing the fleeing Arslanshah ultimately succeeded in capturing him. Although the commander of Sanjar's army wished to bring him before Sanjar, Behramshah feared that his brother would cause trouble once more. By paying a large sum of money, he persuaded the Seljuk commander. After taking custody of his brother Arslanshah, Behramshah had him strangled to death (September–October 1118). Mirhand, pp. 165–166; Göksu, *Gazneliler (963-1186),* p. 77 In fact, the Ghaznavid Arslanshah was a very brave and capable ruler whose greatest misfortune, as Erdoğan Merçil notes, was that fate placed a more courageous and talented figure—Sanjar—in his path. In fact, the Ghaznavid Arslanshah was a very brave and capable ruler whose greatest misfortune, as Erdoğan Merçil puts it, was that fate set against him a figure more courageous and talented than himself: Sanjar. Merçil, *Gazneliler Devleti Tarihi,* p.86-87.

[130] Following his defeat, Arslanshah sought refuge in India accompanied by a small contingent of men. Upon discovering that Sanjar had returned to Khorasan, he likewise returned to Ghazni. In the interim, Bahramshah retreated to Bamiyan and conveyed the circumstances to Sanjar. In reaction, Sanjar dispatched additional troops to aid him. Upon arriving in Ghazni, Arslanshah resided there temporarily before initiating a campaign against his sibling Bahramshah. Nevertheless, by that time, Sanjar's army had arrived and united with the forces of Bahramshah. Neither Arslanshah nor his forces were capable of withstanding the formidable Seljuk army, which they dreaded encountering once more. Arslanshah once again evaded capture; however, he was ultimately apprehended by Gaznavid and Seljuk forces. While the commander of Sanjar's forces from Khorasan aimed to bring Arslanshah before Sanjar, Bahramshah, apprehensive that his brother could once more pose a threat, convinced the commander through a substantial monetary offering. After obtaining custody of his brother, Bahramshah ordered the strangulation of Arslanshah. (September-October 1118). Mirhand, p.165-166; Göksu, *Gazneliler (963-1186)*, p.77; In fact, the greatest misfortune of Arslanshah of Ghazni, who was a very brave and talented ruler, was, as Erdoğan Merçil puts it, that fate favoured a more courageous and talented figure, Sanjar. Merçil, *Gazneliler Devleti Tarihi*, p.86-87.



leading Bahramshah to execute him and nominate Husayn b. Ibrahim al-Alawi in his stead in 1119.[131] Following Horasan Melik Sencer's ascension to the Sultanate in 1118, Behramshah continued to uphold the terms of their prior agreement, acknowledging his indebtedness for the throne. As a result, the relationship between the Ghaznavid and Seljuk empires remained amicable for a prolonged duration during the reign of Behramshah. Nevertheless, by 1134, the circumstances altered when Behramshah neglected to remit the tribute owed to Sultan Sencer. In reaction, Sultan Sencer advanced towards Ghazna in 1135. Behramshah, in a state of alarm, sought refuge in India; however, he was subsequently pardoned by Sencer and restored to his throne.[132]

Following these developments, Behramshah got involved in conflicts with the Ghurid dynasty, which was emerging as an important regional power at the time.[133] Behramshah of Ghazna had poisoned and thus eliminated Ghurid Qutb al-Din Muhammad, who had fled during the struggle for the throne. In response, Sayf al-Din Suri, seeking to take revenge on his brother, organised a large army. Upon receiving this news, Behramshah fled to the city of Kirman, located between Ghazna and India. Consequently, Sayf al-Din Suri assumed authority over Ghazna peacefully and proclaimed his sultanate in the region in 1148. Subsequently, Behramshah amassed his forces, overcame Sayf al-Din Suri, and reclaimed Ghazna but during this confrontation, Sayf al-Din Suri was fatally wounded.[134]

Ghurid Ala al-Din Husayn advanced against Behramshah to seek retribution for the deaths of Behramshah's brothers, Malik Kutb al-Din Muhammad and Sayf al-Din Suri. He vanquished Behramshah in three engagements, compelling him to relinquish Ghazna and retreat to India (1151). Ala al-Din Husayn systematically incinerated and devastated Ghazna over a period of seven consecutive days and nights. His intense anger led him to command the opening of the tombs of the Ghazna rulers and, with the exception of Sultan Mahmud, Masud, and Ibrahim, he ordered the exhumation of the remains of the other Ghazna sultans and the subsequent incineration of their bones. As a consequence of these reprehensible deeds,

131 Mirhand, p.167.

132 Merçil, "Gazneliler", p.482.

133 About the Ghurids refer to Vural Öntürk, *Gurlular (1157-1216)*, Selenge Bilgi Serisi, Istanbul 2019.

134 Merçil, *Gazneliler Devleti Tarihi*, p.89; Göksu, *Gazneliler (963-1186)*, p.79-80.

he acquired the designation "Ala al-Din-i Jihansuz," which translates to "Ala al-Din the World Burner."[135]

In 1152, Behramshah returned to Ghazna after Sultan Sanjar's victory over the Ghurid Ala al-Din Husayn, who had ventured into Khorasan. Consequently, Ghazna was swiftly reintegrated under the dominion of the Ghaznavids. Nevertheless, this advancement failed to fully reinstate order. The Oghuz Rebellion of 1153 and the capture of Sultan Sanjar by the Oghuz had detrimental effects on the Ghaznavids. The ensuing disorder and Behramshah's failure to obtain assistance from Sanjar proved advantageous to the Ghurids. Behramshah persisted in governing Ghazna throughout this turmoil for an additional period; however, he passed away in the year 1157. His successor was his son, Husrevshah (1157–1160).[136] However, during this period, the Ghaznavids had lost considerable power, and the Ghurids began to take the cities held by the Ghaznavids one by one. Husrevshah, having lost Bust, Zamin-Dawar, and Teginabad to the Ghurids, realised that he could not defend Ghazna against the Oghuz invasion of Khorasan, and chose to retreat to Lahore. Subsequent to his exit from Ghazna, the city came under the control of the Oghuz. The disorder in Ghazna persisted until 1173. In that year, the Ghurid Sultan Ghiyath al-Din Muhammad-i Sam advanced towards Ghazna and successfully seized control of the city. Husrevshah persisted in his governance of Lahore until his demise in 1160.[137]

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135 "Gūr Melik Alā' al-Dīn al-Husayn ibn al-Husayn ibn al-Hasan ibn Sām departed from Gūr to seek retribution for the demise of his brother, who had been slain by Sultan Bahramshah ibn Masud in Ghazni. Sultan Alā' al-Dīn was characterized by his courage, ruthlessness, tyrannical nature, and considerable power. During that period, his brother had been murdered, and an atmosphere of silence prevailed, with no one venturing to raise their voice or create any disturbance. He prohibited the equines from exhibiting any signs of exertion or vocalizing until the trumpets were sounded. It was not until after he had conquered Ghazni that he permitted the sounding of trumpets and allowed for nocturnal rest. Upon receiving news of the demise of his brother Sultan Sūrī, he dispatched this quatrain to the chief judge of Ghazni: "My being embodies the suffering of the world's realms /I am he who pursues his adversary and vanquishes forces / Should I fail to eradicate Ghazni / Then I am not Husayn ibn Husayn ibn Hasan." He inflicted considerable devastation upon Ghazni in a manner distinct from that employed by the Oghuz or Tatarp. Following the capture of Ghazni, Bahramshah sought refuge in Kerman and Turan. Pride permeated Alā' al-Dīn's consciousness, and numerous soldiers from Ghazni, Kandahar, Germesir, and the mountainous regions of Gūr assembled in his vicinity. Reşîdü'd-dîn, *Zikr-i Tarih-i Al-i Selçuk*, p.170.

136 el-Cuzcani, p.52-53; Palabıyık, *Gazneli Devleti Saray Teşkilatı*, p.29; Nuhoğlu, *op.cit.*, p.29.

137 In relation to this period see Vural Öntürk, "Gazneliler Devleti'nin Hindistan Kolu (1157-1187)", *Yeni Türkiye*, 135 (2024), p.20-30.



The Last Ghaznavid Ruler: Khusrau Malik (1160–1186)

Following the demise of Husrevshah, his son, Husrev Malik, ascended to the Ghaznavid throne in 1160. Upon ascending to the throne in Lahore, his reign was confined to Lahore and the Punjab region within northern India, reflecting the limited extent of the Ghaznavid state at that time. Husrev Malik, instead of endeavouring to rehabilitate the swiftly deteriorating state, devoted the majority of his time to social gatherings and leisure activities. Consequently, he rapidly forfeited the esteem of the emirs and governmental functionaries. The emirs, progressively disengaging from him, began following their own agenda. The circumstances escalated to a juncture where Husrev Malik began designating his female companions and eunuchs to positions of emirate and military command. In 1180, the Ghurid Sultan Muizz al-Din Muhammad advanced towards Lahore. Following the orchestration of several campaigns aimed at seizing the city, in 1186, he successfully apprehended Husrev Malik and his son, Malikshah.[138] Subsequently, Husrev Malik and his son were transported to Ghazna and thereafter to Firuzkuh, the capital of the Ghurids, for presentation to Ghurid Sultan Giyas al-Din Sam. As documented by Ibn al-Athir, the final Ghaznavid Sultan, Husrev Malik, and his son were not favourably received at the Ghurid court. Sultan Giyas al-Din directed their immediate imprisonment without considering it requisite to engage with them. Consequently, Husrev Malik was incarcerated in the Balervan Fortress in Georgia, while his son, Malikshah, was confined in the Seyfrud Fortress in Gur. Both individuals perished in 1191. Consequently, following the Ghaznavid state, the Ghaznavid dynasty likewise vanished from historical recordp. The final territory governed by the Ghaznavids, Lahore, was granted as an iqta to the governor of Multan, Sipahsalar Ali Kirmac, and was subsequently directly annexed by the Ghuridp. In this manner, the reign of the Ghaznavids formally and effectively concluded in 1186.[139]

As the author of Ravzatu's-safa states, "All the Ghaznavids succumbed to the Ghuridp. Each of them tasted the bitter cup of poverty and death. Thus, no trace of the Sebuktigin dynasty remained. From those glorious sultans, nothing remains but this story. O people of insight, take heed and learn a lesson."[140]

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138 Mirhand, p.168-169; el-Cuzcani, p.49-50.

139 Merçil, *Gazneliler Devleti Tarihi*, p.90-91; Göksu, *Gazneliler (963-1186)*, p.81-82; İzzetullah Zeki, "Gazne'siz Gazneli Devleti: Hüsrev Melik Dönemi (1160–1186)", *Selçuk Üniversitesi Türkiyat Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 46 (2019), p.269-278.

140 Mirhand, p.169.



Conclusion

The Ghaznavid State, established in 977 by Sebüktigin subsequent to the Samanid commander Alptegin's capture of Ghazni in 963, governed for two centuries until 1187, presiding over an extensive domain that extended from modern-day Afghanistan to northern India, and from Khorasan to Transoxiana. Referred to in contemporary sources as the Sebüktiginids, Mahmudids, or Ghaznavids, this Turkish state made considerable contributions not solely through its political and military endeavors but also through its influence on the dissemination of Islam, particularly in the Indian subcontinent, and the advancement of Turkish-Islamic culture and civilization through the cultural and civil institutions it founded. While the introduction of Islam occurred prior, the Indian region underwent a significant acceleration of Islamization during the Ghaznavid conquests, and subsequently, the influence of various Turkish and Islamic dynasties persisted until the disintegration of the Mughal Empire in the mid-19th century.

The most notable legacy of the Turkish governance that commenced with the Ghaznavids in India and its adjacent regions and endured for nine centuries is the contemporary Muslim population in the area. In India, which was colonized by the British Empire (England) during the 19th century, the predominant proportion of the Muslim population is located in Pakistan. In 1946, the British partitioned the Indian subcontinent into two territories, namely Pakistan and India; subsequently, in 1947, these two regions formerly under British colonial governance emerged as two sovereign states. East Pakistan, which formed a constituent part of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan established on August 14, 1947, subsequently seceded from Pakistan owing to disagreements with the central government and proclaimed its independence in 1971 as Bangladesh.

The population of Muslims residing in nations such as modern Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh, regions where the Ghaznavids significantly contributed to the dissemination of Islam, represents roughly one-third of the global Muslim population, totaling 1.6 billion. When examined solely from this viewpoint, the magnitude of the Ghaznavid conquests in India becomes evident.

The impact of the Ghaznavids and later Turkish administrations in India extended beyond solely political and religious domainp. The influence of the Ghaznavids and subsequent Turkish administrations in India was not limited solely to political and religious spherep. There is also a significant Turkish impact in terms



of language and culture within the Indian subcontinent. Just as many words have been borrowed from Hindi into Turkish and vice versa, numerous Turkish words have been identified in the Punjabi language spoken in the Punjab region. During this period, the interaction and blending of the languages of the Turkish military personnel who settled in the region with those of the Hindus and Iranians led to the emergence of a new language. Since this language developed within the Sultan's elite army, known as the *ordu-yı mualla*, it came to be called the Ordu or Urdu language. Beyond this, there exists a profound Turkish influence in India across scholarly, intellectual, literary, and artistic fields. From religious sciences and literary works to culinary culture, architecture, art, and aesthetics, the Turkish impact on India in many domains is widely acknowledged. Presently, in nations such as Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, historical, cultural, and mythological vestiges associated with the Ghaznavids, especially the legacy of Sultan Mahmud, remain evident. Pakistanis frequently attribute the enduring presence of Islam in the region to the renowned character and efforts of Sultan Mahmud. The character of Sultan Mahmud, sometimes portrayed in India's Bollywood film industry, continues to be a significant historical figure throughout the wider Indian subcontinent.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: The city of Ghazni



Source: A 19th-century illustration from James Rattray's work titled Afghanistan, British Library.

Appendix 2: Miniature depicting Sebüktegin's conquest of Kusda



Source: *Camiü't-Tevarih*

Appendix 3: A miniature illustrating Sultan Mahmud donning a robe of honour



Source: *Camiü't-Tevarih*

Appendix 4: Kalencer Fortress, May 1814



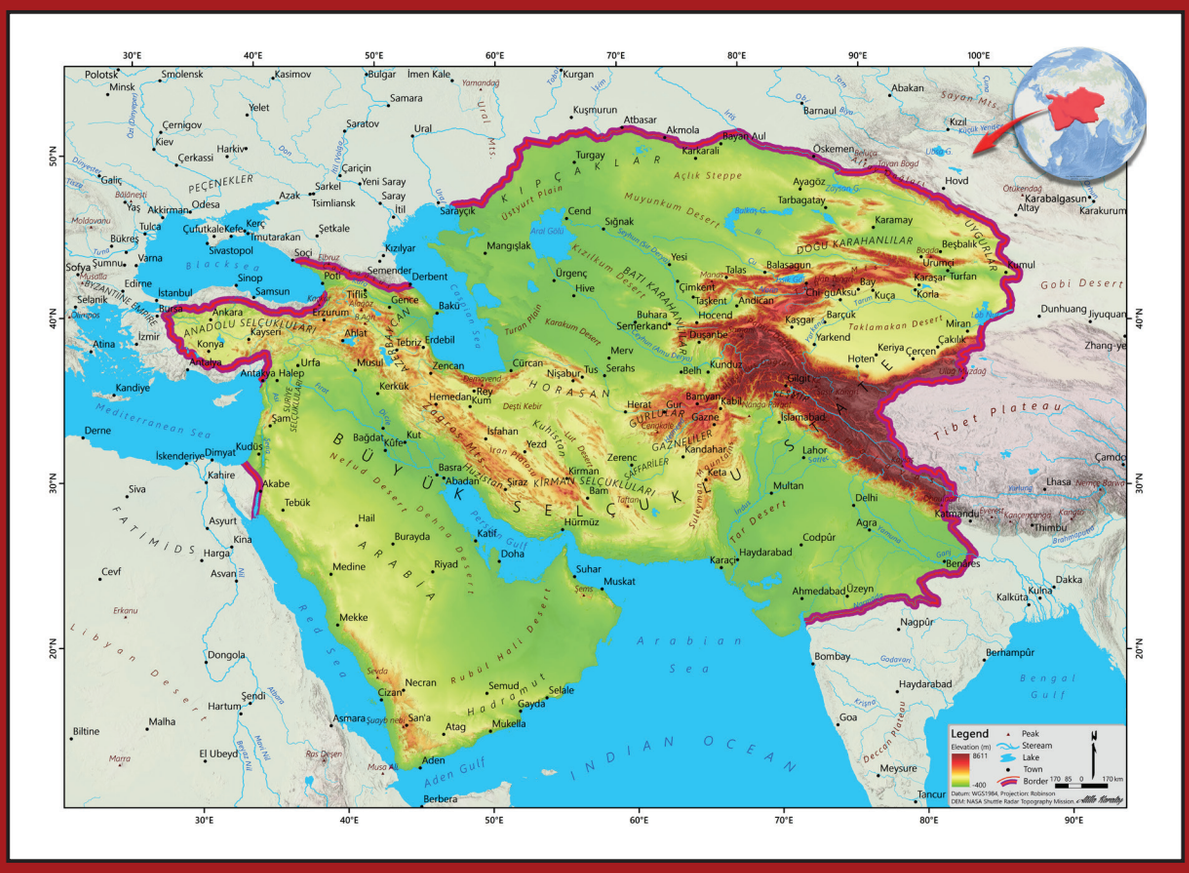
Source: Colin MacKenzie, British Library

Appendix 5: A coin minted in India during the reign of Sultan Mahmud, with one side in Sanskrit.



Source: Erkan Göksu, *Afganistan ve Hindistan'ın İhtişamlı Hanedanı Gazneliler (963-1186),* Selenge Publishing, Istanbul 2021, p.50.

The Great Seljuk Empire



Source: Atilla Karataş Collection



THE GREAT SELJUK EMPIRE

(1040-1157)

Osman G. ÖZGÜDENLİ*

Political History

A scholarly consensus exists with regard to the view that the Seljuks were members of the Kınık tribe within the Oghuz Turks. The first ancestor of the Seljuks identified in historical sources is Dukak, who is noted to have borne the epithet "Iron Bow." While evidence pertains indicating Dukak's subservience to the Khazar sovereign, the precise character of this relationship remains unclear. In contrast, the information pertaining to the interactions with the Oghuz Yabgu State is more direct and unequivocal. Consequently, it is acknowledged that the ancestors of the Seljuks were associated with the Oghuz Yabgu State. Seljuk Subaşı, the son of Dukak, akin to his father, possessed great authority and influence within the Oghuz Yabgu State. Nevertheless, in the year 375 AH / 985-86 CE, Seljuk dissociated himself from the Oghuz Yabgu and established residency with his tribe in the city of Jand, located on the left bank of the Syr Darya River, where he converted to Islam.[1]

[1] Osman G. Özgüdenli, *Selçuklular*, I, *Büyük Selçuklu Devleti Tarihi (1040-1157)*, Istanbul 2013, p.62.

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The sources that have survived to today contain slight information about the events transpiring between Seljuk's conversion to Islam (375 AH / 985-86 CE) and his estimated death around 399 AH / 1009 CE. The most noteworthy event during this era was the martyrdom of Seljuk's son, Mîkâil, father of Tuğrul and Çağrı Bey, while engaged in a military campaign (ghazā) against non-Muslim Turks. In the aftermath of this event, Tuğrul and Çağrı, who would subsequently found the Seljuk State, were nurtured by their grandfather Seljuk Bey.

During this time, the political environment in Transoxiana was characterized by utter disorder. Political authority in the region had transitioned to the Karakhanids, who facilitated the dissolution of the Samanid State. Following the decline of the Samanids, the Ghaznavids initially gained dominance over Khorasan and subsequently extended their authority to the region of Khwarezm. The participation of the Seljuks in the political dynamics of Transoxania troubled the Karakhanids. In 416 AH / 1025 CE, Yusuf Qadir Khan and Mahmud of Ghazni met to address all issues pertaining to their respective states. After this gathering, Arslan Yabghu, the son of Seljuk and head of the Seljuk family, was treacherously seized by Mahmud of Ghazni and imprisoned in the Kalinjar Fortress in Northern India, where he remained until his death in 423 AH / 1032 CE.

Following the incarceration of Arslan Yabghu and the ensuing developments, the Seljuks concluded that their continued presence in Transoxiana was untenable and then relocated to Khwarezm. Nevertheless, they encountered imminent pressure from Shah Malik, the sovereign of Jand. Acknowledging their inability to establish dominance in either Khwarezm or Maveraünnehir, the Seljuks resolved to make one last attempt by advancing into Khorasan. During the spring of 426 AH / 1035 CE, they traversed the Jayhun River and advanced into Khorasan.

The Ghaznavids initially regarded the Seljuks' incursion into Khorasan with considerable nonchalance. Nevertheless, after a period, Sultan Mas'ud of the Ghaznavids acknowledged the severity of the circumstances and personally travelled to Nishapur to engage with the Seljuks. The army that he mobilized and sent forth from Nishapur was defeated by the Seljuks in the vicinity of Nisa. Subsequently, an agreement facilitated the formal transfer of Nisa, Farava, and Dihistan from the Ghaznavids to the administration of the Seljuks.[2] Nevertheless, the period of peace in Khorasan was transient. In 429/1038, amidst the conflict in the vicinity

[2] Ebu'l-Fazl el-Beyhakî, *Târîh-i Beyhakî*, transcribed by 'Alî Ekber Feyyâz, Meşhed 1375/1996, p.641.



of Serahs, the Ghaznavid forces were again defeated by the Seljuks. This second triumph over the Ghaznavid forces led to the majority of Khorasan falling under the control of the Seljuks.[3]

Sultan Mas'ud assembled a formidable military force of approximately 50,000 soldiers accompanied by 300 battle elephants, with the objective of expelling the Seljuks from the area. Furthering his campaign, in 430/1039, he triumphed over the Seljuks, led by Çağrı Bey, at Ulyââbâd. The Seljuks persisted in their endeavours; however, they suffered another defeat at the hands of the Ghaznavid forces in the vicinity of Talhâb. Following these recent setbacks, the Seljuks made preparations for one last critical confrontation. The Ghaznavid forces engaged in the pursuit of the Seljuks. In the vicinity of the Dandânakân fortress, a conflict commenced on 6 Ramadan 431 / 21 May 1040 and persisted for three days, culminating in a significant triumph for the Seljuks over the Ghaznavids.

The Battle of Dandānqān witnessed the onset of a significant new era in the historical trajectory of the Near East. In the aftermath of the battle, a council (kurultay) was assembled, during which Tuğrul Bey (1040–1063) was proclaimed as "sultan." Within the Seljuk dynasty, Çağrı Bey acquired authority over Eastern Khurasan, while Musa Yabghu assumed responsibility for Sistan, and Kavurd Bey, Çağrı Bey's son, obtained governance of Kirman. Consequently, following an extended period of confrontations, the Seljuk State was founded.

The Seljuk State underwent significant and rapid expansion during the initial fifteen years after the conflict. In the year 433 AH / 1041–42 CE, Tuğrul Bey directed his focus towards the regions of Gurgan and Tabaristan. Following the establishment of dominance over these territories, he turned the focus of his campaign towards the west. In 434 AH / 1042 CE, the forces led by Ibrahim Inal, the maternal half-brother of Tuğrul and Çağrı Bey, seized the city of Rayy, an important hub in central Iran. Subsequently, Tuğrul Bey arrived in Rayy and proclaimed it as the capital, ordering for its reconstruction to commence. Thereafter, in 1046–47 AD, he laid siege to Isfahan. As the siege continued, Tuğrul Bey negotiated a pact with Abu Mansur Faramurz of the Kakuyid dynasty, the sovereign of the city, and ended the siege in return for significant tribute. During Tuğrul Bey's second military campaign which targeted Isfahan, the city was captured in 443 AH /

[3] After their victory, the Seljuks extended their power as far as Herât (Refer to Abdurrahman Fâmî-yi Herevî, *Târîh-i Herât: Destneveştî-yi Novyâfte*, transcribed by Îrec Afşâr, Tahran 1387/2008, p.125-126).

1051 CE after an extended siege.[4] Historical accounts indicate that subsequent to the capture of Isfahan, Tuğrul Bey administered justice to the populace, bequethed lavish gifts, and diligently worked to enhance the city's prosperity.[5]

One of the most critical issues that preoccupied the Seljuk state during the reign of Tuğrul Bey was the mass Oghuz (Turkmen) migrations toward the west, and the Seljuk raids launched against the Byzantine Empire, so that these migrations could take place. In the course of one of these incursions, a Seljuk prince by the name of Hasan met his demise. Ibrahim Yinal and Kutalmish were tasked with seeking retribution for his demise. On September 18, 1048, they secured a significant triumph by overcoming a Byzantine force of approximately 50,000 soldiers near Hasankale.[6]

In an effort to overcome the resistance of the Byzantine Empire and facilitate the advancement of the Turkmens, Tuğrul Bey infiltrated Eastern Anatolia at the onset of the year 446 AH / 1054 CE accompanied by a formidable army. Following the acquisition of the fortresses of Bargiri and Erciş, he ordered a siege of the fortress of Malazgirt. With the onset of winter amid the prolonged siege, the operation was halted with the anticipation of recommencing the campaign in the spring.[7]

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4 İbnu'l-Esîr, *el-Kâmil fi't-târîh: İslâm Tarihi,* trans. Abdülkerim Özaydın, IX, İstanbul 1987, p.427.

5 Fahru'd-dîn-i Gurgânî, *Vîs u Râmin*, edited by Muctebâ Mînovî, Tahran 1338/1959, p.23; Nâsir-i Husrev, *Sefer-nâme*, edited by Muhammed Debîr Siyâkî, Tahran 1375/1996, p.166-167; Mufaddal el-Mâferrûhî, *Mehâsin-i İsfahân*, edited by Seyyid Celâlu'd-dîn Huseynî, Tahran 1312/1933, p.101; Huseyn b. Muhammed b. Ebu'r-Rızâ-yi Âvî, *Tercüme-yi Mehâsin-i İsfahân*, edited by Abbâs İkbâl, Tahran 1328/1949, p.96-97; İbn Hassûl, "İbn Hassûl'un Türkler Hakkında Bir Eseri", trans. Şerefeddin Yaltkaya, *Belleten*, IV/14-15 (1940), p.264.

6 Johannes Zonaras, *Militärs und Höflinge im Ringen um das Kaisertum. Byzantinische Geschichte von 969 bis 1118 nach der Chronik des Johannes Zonaras*, trans. Erich Trapp, Graz-Wien-Köln 1986 p.104-105; John Skylitzes, *A Synopsis of Byzantine History, 811-1057*, Eng. trans. John Wortley, Cambridge 2010, p.425-426; H. Grégoire, "Nicéphore Bryennios, les quatre livres des histoires, traduction française avec notes par Henri Grégoire", *Byzantion*, XXIII (1953), p.484-485; Vardan, "Türk Fütuhatı Tarihi (889-1269)", trans. Hrant D. Andreasyan), *Tarih Semineri Dergisi*, 2 (1937), p.175; Ernst Honigmann, *Bizans Devletinin Doğu Sınırı*, trans. Fikret Işıltan, Istanbul 1970, p.178; Mükrimin Halil Yinanç, *Türkiye Tarihi, Selçuklu Devri I: Anadolu'nun Fethi*, Istanbul 1944, p.44-49; Wolfgang Felix, *Byzanz und die islamische Welt im früheren 11. Jahrhundert: Geschichte der politischen Beziehungen von 1001 bis 1055*, Wien 1981, p.165-169.

7 Urfalı Mateos, *Urfalı Mateos Vekayi-nâmesi (952-1136) ve Papaz Grigor'un Zeyli (1136-1162)*, trans. H. D. Andreasyan, Ankara 1987, p.102; Ebu'l-Ferec, İbnu'l-İbrî (Bar Hebraeus),



During the rule of Tuğrul Bey, the most active area of foreign policy was his interaction with the Abbasid Caliphate. The basis of the relationship between the Seljuks and the Abbasid Caliphate was predicated, from the perspective of the Seljuks, on the imperative to legitimize their political authority, while for the Abbasid caliphs, it rested on the aspiration to reclaim the religious and temporal power that had been relinquished to secular rulers loyal to them.

The Abbasid Caliph al-Qa'im bi-Amrillah (1031–1075) extended an invitation to Tuğrul Bey to visit Baghdad in 437/1045 in order to mitigate the disorder instigated by the Buwayhid amir of Turkish origin, Arslan al-Basasiri.[8] Nevertheless, it is acknowledged that Tuğrul Bey did not react well to this invitation. Notwithstanding a reiterated invitation from the Caliph in 444/1052, Tuğrul Bey exhibited a cautious approach. Upon the establishment of entirely advantageous political circumstances, Tuğrul Bey departed from Rayy en route to Baghdad accompanied by a sizable army in the autumn of 447/1055. He entered the city without facing substantial opposition. Conflicts that emerged between the Turkish-origin Buwayhid soldiers and Seljuk forces culminated in the removal of the final Buwayhid ruler, al-Malik al-Rahim Khusraw Firuz, and the subsequent pillaging of specific areas of the city by the Seljuk army. This event marked the end of the Buwayhid dynasty's presence in historical narratives. Following the reduction in tensions, Caliph al-Qa'im bi-Amrillah married Khadija Arslan Khatun, the daughter of Çağrı Bey, thus forming a familial alliance between the Seljuks and the caliphate.[9]

Tuğrul Bey sat on a gilded throne presented to him by Caliph al-Qa'im bi-Amrillah within the palace whose construction he had ordered in Baghdad. Upon Tuğrul Bey's return to Baghdad in 449/1058, the Caliph conferred all his temporal authority within the nation to the Sultan. Nevertheless, when Tuğrul Bey departed Baghdad as a result of İbrahim Yinal's rebellion in Hamadan, Arslan al-Basasiri captured Baghdad and confined the Caliph under house arrest for a year.

Abu'l-Farac Tarihi, trans. Ömer Rıza Doğrul, I, Ankara 1987, p.306; Hrand D. Andreasyan, "Türk Tarihine Ait Ermeni Kaynakları", *İ.Ü.E.F. Tarih Dergisi*, 1 (1949), p.100; Georg Ostrogorsky, *Bizans Devleti Tarihi*, trans. Fikret Işıltan, Istanbul 1981, p.319; W. Felix, *Byzanz und die Islamische Welt*, p.173-177.

8 Erika Glassen, *Der mittlere Weg. Studien zur Religionspolitik und Religiosität der späteren Abbasiden-Zeit*, Wiesbaden 1981, p.36.

9 Suat Kaymak, "Selçuklu Hanedanının Hatunları: Çağrı Bey'in Kızları", *Ortaçağda Kadın: Hırs, Tutku ve Hakimiyet*, ed. Tülay Metin-Songül Dumlupınar Alican, Istanbul 2024, p.247-249.

Subsequently, Tuğrul Bey quelled İbrahim Yinal's insurrection in Hamadan, obtained the Caliph's emancipation through correspondence, and subsequently initiated a second campaign toward Baghdad. In 451/1060, the Sultan advanced upon Arslan al-Basasiri and prior to his capture and execution, the Sultan returned to Baghdad, where he was afforded a significant reception (Safar 452/March 1060).

In his later life, Tuğrul Bey married Seyyide Hatun, the daughter of Caliph al-Qa'im bi-Amrillah, notwithstanding the Caliph's initial hesitation, which was overcome by Tuğrul Bey's resolute position and significant political pressure. Following his wedding in Baghdad, Tuğrul Bey returned to Ray, where he succumbed to illness and died on 8 Ramadan 455 / September 4, 1063.[10]

Tuğrul Bey, who governed for about twenty-five years, was over seventy years in age at the time of his passing. This eminent ruler, dedicated his life to traversing various military campaigns, established the groundwork for a formidable state through his attributes of patience, steadfastness, courage, judiciousness, and relentless vigour. Possessing military proficiency, political acumen, and competence as a ruler, he represents a distinctive historical figure who ascended from tribal leadership to attain the sovereignty of a substantial and well-organized state. Notwithstanding the numerous adversities he faced, Tuğrul Bey was recognized for his amiable and forbearing disposition, often extending forgiveness to those who repeatedly revolted against him.

As Tuğrul Bey lacked a direct successor, he appointed Süleyman, the son of Çağrı Bey, as his crown prince. Nevertheless, in accordance with the traditions of the ancient Turkic state, which lacked rigid succession regulations, all members of the dynasty possessed an equivalent claim to the throne. Under these circumstances, a renewed power struggle for the throne within the Seljuk State became unavoidable. Süleyman was promptly inaugurated as ruler in the capital Rey by the vizier 'Amîdu'l-Mulk al-Kundurî subsequent to the demise of Tuğrul Bey. Nonetheless, the pressure exerted on Rey by another claimant from the dynasty, Kutalmış, intensified progressively. When Alp-Arslan, the offspring of Çağrı Bey, likewise asserted his claim to the throne, Süleyman departed from Rey and relocated to Shiraz.

At this point, the most formidable contender for the Seljuk throne was Kutalmış, the offspring of Arslan Yabgu, who enjoyed significant backing from substantial factions of Turkmen. Having overcome the opposing forces, Kutalmış

[10] Mehmet Altay Köymen, "Tuğrul Bey", *İA*, XII/2, s.40.



entered Rey in 455/1063 and proclaimed his authority. Recognizing his inability to challenge Kutalmış independently, Vizier Amîdu'l-Mulk al-Kundurî found it necessary to solicit assistance from Alp-Arslan. Having eliminated his paternal great uncle Mûsâ Yabgu, who likewise asserted a claim to the throne, Alp-Arslan advanced from Merv to Rey accompanied by a formidable military force. The two armies encountered each other in the vicinity of Damghan within the Milh (Dih-i Nemek) valley. Subsequent to a fierce confrontation, Kutalmış suffered defeat, and his remains were discovered on the field of battle. Following his triumph, Alp-Arslan arrived in the capital Rey on 30 Muharram 456 / 23 January 1064 and assumed the Seljuk throne.

Sultan Alp-Arslan (1064–1072) restructured the central administration and chose Nizâmü'l-Mulk as his vizier, and on 1 Rabi' al-Awwal 456 / 22 February 1064, he left Rey accompanied by a considerable army, heading towards Azerbaijan. Through a successful military campaign, Ani, recognized as the most fortified city in Eastern Anatolia—was taken on 16 August 1064, resulting in the subjugation of the Armenian and Georgian kingdoms under Seljuk dominion. The capture of Ani by the Seljuk sultan elicited a tremendous response across the Islamic world. After this triumph, the Caliph conferred upon Sultan Alp-Arslan the honorific title "Ebu'l-Feth," which translates to "Father of the Conquest."[11] During that period, learning of the insubordination of his elder brother, Kavurd Bey, who served as the governor of Kirmān, the Sultan promptly returned and travelled from Isfahan to Kirmān. Confronted with the military initiatives of Alp-Arslan, Kavurd Bey acknowledged his subordination; the Sultan then granted his brother clemency and then travelled back to Isfahan.

In 457/1065, Sultan Alp-Arslan traversed the Jayhun River and entered the region of Transoxiana. The probable justification for this campaign was the increasing influence of the Kipchaks located east of the Caspian Sea. In an effort to protect the trade routes, the Sultan directed his attention towards the north. Having subdued the Kipchaks, he advanced upon the Turkmens who were bothering the merchants, and dealt out appropriate punishment.[12]

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11 Ebu'l-Ferec, *Abu'l-Farac Tarihi*, I, p.317; Emînu'd-devle İbnu'l-Muvsalâyâ, *Resâilu Emînu'd-devle el-Muvsalâyâ*, edited by İsâm Mustafâ 'Abdu'l-hâdî Akle, Ayn 1424/2003, p.356-359, nr.42.

12 Abdülkerim Özaydın, *Büyük Selçuklu İmparatorluğu (1040-1157), (Siyasi Tarih, Teşkılât ve İdare)*, Istanbul 2023, p.111.

The determination of Sultan Alp-Arslan to have his son Melikshah, whom he chose as his heir at Radgan, was read in the khutbahs (sermons) across the domain, precipitated another rebellion by Kavurd Bey. In retaliation, Alp-Arslan mobilized his forces against Kavurd Bey in 459/1067 and emerged victorious. Following the defeat of Kavurd Bey, the Sultan pardoned him. Following the quelling of Kavurd Bey's rebellion, Sultan Alp-Arslan started a campaign against Georgia. The Seljuk forces crossed the Aras River and invaded Georgia, necessitating the Georgian monarch's capitulation. Hearing of reports of disturbances in Transoxiana the Sultan halted the campaign and returned to Khorasan.

During Sultan Alp-Arslan's campaigns to the north and east of the Aral Sea, he delegated his principal emirs to undertake incursions into Anatolia. The Seljuk incursions into Anatolia escalated in both frequency and intensity. During this era, Emperor Romanos IV Diogenes (1068–1071), having assumed the Byzantine throne, personally spearheaded a military campaign aimed at neutralizing the Seljuk threat. Having progressed as far as Syria during the campaign, the emperor retreated to Constantinople with the onset of winter. To cease the continuous incursions, he initiated another campaign the following year, ultimately arriving in Kayseri. Despite his efforts to confront the returning Seljuk forces, his endeavours proved fruitless, compelling him to retreat to Constantinople. These incursions, which progressively limited Byzantine operations in Anatolia, rendered a new military campaign inevitable for Romanos IV Diogenes. In the interim, occurrences within the Fatimid state turned the attention of Sultan Alp-Arslan towards Egypt.

In the mid-1070s, Alp-Arslan advanced into Anatolia at the head of a formidable army, ultimately arriving at the fortifications of Malazgirt Fortress. The fortress was unable to resist the Seljuk forces for an extended period. Persisting in his military efforts, the Sultan progressed to Aleppo. During the siege of Aleppo, Mahmûd, the Mirdâsî governor of the city, appeared before the Sultan accompanied by his mother and reaffirmed his loyalty. Consequently, the Mirdâsîs were integrated into the Seljuk State. At this moment, upon learning that Emperor Romanos IV Diogenes was marching eastward accompanied by a substantial army, the Sultan promptly redirected his forces from Hoy to Ahlat.

As Emperor Romanos IV Diogenes reached the plains of Manzikert accompanied by a substantial army, Sultan Alp-Arslan was concurrently progressing towards Ahlat. The Sultan dispatched emissaries to the emperor to negotiate peace; however, assured of his advantage in the number of troops, the emperor declined



the proposal. For this reason, on August 26, 1071 (27 Dhu al-Qi'dah 463 AH), the two armies came face to face on the Rahva Plain. Leveraging his superior forces, the emperor mobilized all his troops for deployment on the battlefield. In reaction to the Byzantine offensive, the Seljuk forces conducted an orderly retreat. Perceiving this ploy as a genuine defeat, the Byzantine emperor engaged in pursuit of the Seljuk troops. As the Byzantine troops encountered a premeditated ambush, the Seljuks initiated a retaliatory counterattack. Simultaneously, various Turkish contingents within the Byzantine army, comprising Uz (Oghuz) and Pecheneg soldiers, defected to the Seljuk faction. Despite being surprised, the emperor persisted in the confrontation. Following an intense conflict, a considerable segment of the Byzantine military was annihilated. Romanos IV Diogenes, having been captured, was taken to Alp-Arslan, who showed clemency towards him while elucidating his errors. Once a peace treaty had been finalised between the two states, the emperor and his aristocracy were escorted back to Constantinople by a cavalry unit on September 3, 1071.[13]

The Battle of Manzikert significantly hastened the entry of the Turks into Anatolia, establishing the foundation for the region's transformation into a Turkish homeland. By facilitating the mobilization of substantial Turkmen populations assembled in Western Iran and Azerbaijan, it also greatly influenced the trajectory of a considerably larger geographical region.

Once again, Alp-Arslan redirected his focus towards the East. In 464/1072, the sultan began a campaign towards Transoxiana accompanied by a substantial army,

[13] The Battle of Malazgirt has been the subject of many researches due to its importance: İbrahim Kafesoğlu, "Malazgirt Meydan Muharebesi", *26 Ağustos 1071 Malazgirt Savaşının 888. Yıl Dönümü Hatırası*, Erzurum 1959, p.15-25; Faruk Sümer, "Malazgirt Savaşına Katılan Türk Beyleri", *Selçuklu Araştırmaları Dergisi*, IV (1975), p.197-207; Cl. Cahen, "İslâm Kaynaklarına Göre Malazgirt Savaşı", trans. Z. Korkmaz, *Türkiyat Mecmuası*, XVII (1972), p.77-100; Alfred Friendly, *The Dreadful Day: The Battle of Manzikert 1071*, London 1981; Ekkehard Eickhoff, "Zur Wende von Manzikert", *Das andere Wahrnehmen. Beiträge zur europäischen Geschichte, August Nitschke zum 65. Geburtstag gewidmet*, ed. M. Kintzinger -W. Stürner-J. Zahlten, Köln-Wien 1991, p.101-119; Mehmet Altay Köymen, *Büyük Selçuklu İmparatorluğu Tarihi*, III, *Alp Arslan ve Zamanı*, Ankara 1992, p.26-38; Carole Hillenbrand, *Malazgirt Muharebesi: Türklerin Efsanesi İslamın Simgesi*, trans. Mehmet Moralı, Istanbul 2015; David Nicolle, *Malazgirt 1071: Bizans Gücünün Çöküşü*, illüstrasyonlar Christa Hook, trans. Özgür Kolçak, Istanbul 2013; Mustafa Alican, *Malazgirt 1071: Kıyametin İlk Günü*, Istanbul 2013; Muharrem Kesik, *1071 Malazgirt: Zafere Giden Yol*, Istanbul 2013; *Alp Arslan ve Malazgirt*, ed. Erdoğan Merçil, Istanbul 2014; *Malazgirt Zaferi: Bin Yıllık Miras*, ed. Mustafa Alican, Istanbul 2018.

and while crossing the Jeyhun River, faced resistance at Barzam Castle. Recognizing his inability to breach the defence, the castle commander Yusuf al-Khwarezmi surrendered but inflicted a severe wound on Alp-Arslan using a dagger concealed within his boot while being taken to interrogation. Sultan Alp-Arslan died on 10 Rabi' al-Awwal 465 / 23 November 1072, and his remains were transported to the city of Merv, where he was laid to rest alongside his father, Çağrı Bey.[14]

Alp-Arslan, whose brief reign was characterized by military campaigns was either forty-one or forty-three years of age, distinguished himself through his elevated moral character, considerable vigour, and commitment to justice. Characterized in contemporary sources as a skilled archer, a valiant combatant, a benevolent individual, and an equitable ruler, the sultan won respect through his commanding presence. In his council, registers were maintained documenting the identities of numerous impoverished individuals throughout the realm, and salaries and provisions were distributed to aid them.[15]

Upon the passing of Sultan Alp-Arslan, his heir, Melikshah (1072-1092), came to the throne. Nevertheless, Kavurd Bey, the governor of Kirman, refused to acknowledge the authority of Melikshah. In pursuit of this aim, he advanced towards the capital, Rey, accompanied by a formidable army. Melikshah rapidly organised his troops and proceeded towards Rey. Subsequently, Kavurd Bey's forces experienced a significant defeat. Despite Kavurd Bey's efforts to seek reconciliation with his nephew, he met his death through strangulation using a bowstring.

After quelling Kavurd Bey's revolt, Melikshah turned his focus towards the eastern regions. After making the required preparations, he led a mighty army on a campaign towards Transoxiana. As the Seljuk forces advanced towards Samarkand, the Karakhanid ruler Nasr II conceded defeat and committed to an oath of

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14 'Azîmî, *Azimî Tarihi: Selçuklular Dönemiyle İlgili Bölümler (H. 430-538=1038/39-1143/44)*, trans. and ed. Ali Sevim, Ankara 1988, p.20; İbnu'l-Cevzî, *el-Muntazam fî târîhi'l-mulûk ve'l-umem*, trans. Ali Sevim, "İbnü'l-Cevzî'nin el-Muntazam Adlı Eserinde Selçuklular ile İlgili Bilgiler (h. 430-485=1038-1092)", *TTK Belgeler*, XXVI/30 (2005), p.52; İbnu'l-Esîr, *el-Kâmil*, X, s.78; Sıbt İbnu'l-Cevzî, *Mir'âtu'z-zamân fî târîhi'l-a'yân*, trans. Ali Sevim, *Mir'âtü'z-zamân fî târîhi'l-a'yân'da Selçuklular*, Ankara 2011, p.184; Ebu'l-Ferec, *Abu'l-Farac Tarihi*, I, p.325; İbn Kesîr, *el-Bidâye ve'n-nihâye fi't-târîh*, trans. Mehmet Keskin, XII, Istanbul 1995, p.228.

15 İbnu'l-Esîr, *el-Kâmil*, X, p.79; Muhammed er-Râvendî, *Râhatu's-sudûr ve âyetu's-surûr*, trans. Ahmed Ateş, *Gönüllerin Rahatı ve Sevinç Alâmeti*, I, Ankara 1957, p.88; Reşîdu'd-dîn Fazlullâh-i Hemedânî, *Câmiu't-tevârîh*, II/5, *Selçuklular Tarihi*, edited by Ahmed Ateş, Ankara 1960, p.30.



fealty. The sultan acknowledged this submission and subsequently returned to Rey. Meanwhile, apprehensive about Melikshah's progression with a formidable army towards the eastern regions, the Ghaznavids are said to have emancipated the sultan's uncle, Osman, whom they had previously imprisoned.[16] Thus, the eastern borders of the Seljuk State were once again secured.

Thereafter, Melikshah embarked on a variety of domestic reforms. He transferred the capital from Ray to Isfahan and decreed significant architectural endeavours in the city. He directed the construction of various pavilions, gardens, and fortifications surrounding the urban area. To promote a more effective education system, he founded a substantial madrasa. Referenced in the sources as Medrese-yi Celâlî and Medrese-yi Melikshâhî, this madrasa is thought to have functioned as an educational institution for a long period of time.[17]

Nizam al-Mulk commissioned the construction of a residence in Isfahan and relocated his family to the city. The domes positioned on the north and south flanks of the Isfahan Jāmiʿ Mosque, regarded as one of the most exemplary illustrations of contemporary Iranian mosque architecture, originate from this era. Furthering his development initiatives, Nizām al-Mulk established a khānqāh (Sufi lodge) in the urban area for the benefit of the Sufis. Consequently, it is acknowledged that a great intellectual and cultural resurgence occurred in Isfahan, the capital of the Seljuk dynasty.[18]

The sizeable migration of Turkmens from the eastern regions to the western regions contined throughout the rule of Sultan Malik-Shah. The region encompassing Syria and Palestine became the operational domain of significant Turkmen tribes, and the Sultan conferred this territory as an iqṭāʿ to his sibling Tājud-Dawla Tutush. Gradually, Tutush solidified his influence in the region and founded the

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16 İbnu'l-Esîr, *el-Kâmil*, X, p.92-93; Bundârî, *Zubdetu'n-nusra ve nuhbetu'l-usra*, edited by M. Th. Houtsma, Leiden 1889, p.56-57; O. Pritsak, "Karahanlılar", *İA*, VI, p.263; İbrahim Kafesoğlu, *Sultan Melikşah Devrinde Büyük Selçuklu İmparatorluğu*, Istanbul 1953, p.28-29; Ömer Soner Hunkan, *Türk Hakanlığı (Karahanlılar): Kuruluş-Gelişme-Çöküş (766-1212)*, Istanbul 2007, p.343-345.

17 Zahîru'd-dîn-i Nîşâbûrî, *Selçûk-nâme*, edited by A. H. Morton, London 2004, p.30-31; *el-Muhtârât mine'r-resâil*, edited by Gulâm-Rızâ Tâhir-Îrec Afşâr, Tahran 1378/1999, p.442; Heribert Horst, *Die Staatsverwaltung der Grossselğugen und Horazmšahs (1038-1231)*, Wiesbaden 1964, p.30, 112; Nûrullah Kesâ'î, *Medâris-i Nizâmiyye ve te'sîrât-i 'ilmî ve ictimâî-yi ân*, Tahran 1363/1984, p.228.

18 Refer to İbnu'l-Kemâl İlyas b. Ahmed, Keşfu'l-akabe, edited by Mikâil Bayram, Konya 1981, Introduction, p.13.

Syrian Seljuk Principality. These developments in Syria unsettled the regional dynasties in the adjacent areas. As a result of this unrest, Sultan Malik-Shah mobilized a formidable military force and dispatched it to the Diyarbekir region. The Marwanid state was eliminated, and the area was directly integrated into Seljuk governance (478 AH / 1085 CE).

During the siege of Amid, the alliance between the Uqaylids and the Marwanids led Sultan Malik-Shah to dispatch an army towards Mosul. The Seljuk forces rapidly seized control of the city. Malik-Shah personally journeyed from Isfahan to Mosul. The ruler of Mosul, Sharaf al-Dawla Muslim, presented himself before the sultan and begged to be pardoned for his wrong doings. During this period, Malik-Shah was informed that his brother Tekish had sparked a rebellion in Khorasan. He acceded to Sharaf al-Dawla Muslim's plea for forgiveness. Tekish, who had previously rebelled and received forgiveness, exploited Malik-Shah's presence in Mosul to initiate another uprising. In due course, Malik-Shah personally travelled to Khorasan and quashed the insurgency. To forestall potential future uprisings, Tekish was blinded and imprisoned.

During a period of unrest in Georgia, Malik-Shah started a campaign in 471 AH / 1078–79 CE, successfully subjugating the region under his authority. Subsequently, in 478 AH / 1086 CE, the Sultan once more ventured into the Caucasus. Extending his influence to the Black Sea, he strengthened Seljukid hegemony in the area.

During Sultan Malik-Shah's involvement with Tekish's revolt, Süleyman Shah, the son of Qutalmish and the ruler of the autonomous Seljuk state in Anatolia, extended his influence southward and seized Antioch. In furtherance of his campaign, Süleyman Shah began a siege of the city of Aleppo. Nevertheless, he was killed by the Seljuk Sultan of Syria, Tutush, (18 Safar 479 AH / 3 June 1086 CE). As a retaliation, Malik-Shah started a campaign in 479 AH / 1086 CE coupled with a formidable army, progressing from Mosul towards Harran. He then arrived in Aleppo and proceeded towards Antioch, without any resistance. Subsequently, Malik-Shah arrived at the Mediterranean shoreline. As a result of this, the Great Seljuk Empire achieved its most extensive western boundaries.

Following the extension of the Seljuk Empire's boundaries to the Mediterranean towards the west, Sultan Malik-Shah reached Baghdad in 479 AH / 1087 CE. The Abbasid Caliph al-Muqtadi bi-Amr Allah (r. 1075–1094) chose Malik-Shah as al-Sultān al-Mashriq wa'l-Maghrib ("the Sultan of the East and the West").



In response to instability within the Karakhanid dynasty, Malik-Shah set off with a substantial army and marched toward Transoxiana in 481 AH / 1088–89 CE. Having passed the Jayhun (Amu Darya) River and subjugated the Eastern Karakhanids under Seljuk authority, he then returned to Khorasan. Nevertheless, shortly after his repatriation, another revolt erupted in Transoxiana. Consequently, in 482 AH / 1090 CE, Malik-Shah found it necessary to initiate a military campaign in the region once again. The city of Samarkand was taken by the Seljuk forces, and the Eastern Karakhanid state was once again compelled into submission. Consequently, the eastern boundaries of the Seljuk Empire reached as far as the borders of China.

Following the end of his campaign in Transoxiana in the east, Malik-Shah arrived in Baghdad for the second time in 484 AH / 1091 CE. Greeted with an elaborate ceremony, the sultan participated in numerous philanthropic endeavours throughout his visit. He commenced the construction of the Sultan Mosque and oversaw the refurbishment of the marketplace, which was initially established during the rule of Tuğrul Beg.

During the sultan's presence in Baghdad, a Seljuk army started its expedition from the city and advanced into Arabia. The Seljuk military force that entered the Hejaz solidified Seljuk influence in the region before extending its reach into Yemen, thereby subjecting the region to Seljuk dominion.[19]

Throughout the reign of Sultan Malik-Shah, Nizam al-Mulk, who served as vizier for approximately thirty years, contributed greatly to the considerable prosperity attained by the Seljuk Empire. Nevertheless, specific allegations directed at the vizier led to a schism between the sultan and Nizām al-Mulk. Despite the continued animosity between Malik-Shah and Nizām al-Mulk, the Sultan left Isfahan en route to Baghdad. Nizām al-Mulk swiftly accompanied the sultan. However, he was assassinated in close proximity to Nihavand in Sahneh by a Nizari Ismaili (Bātinī) assassin.[20] This assassination, for which the link to Sultan Malik-Shah re-

[19] Bundârî, *Zubdetu'n-nusra ve nuhbetu'l-usra*, p.69; İbnu'l-Esîr, *el-Kâmil*, X, p.176; Abdülkerim Özaydın, *Büyük Selçuklu İmparatorluğu (1040-1157),* p.164-165.

[20] 'Azîmî, *Azimî Tarihi*, p.28; İbnu'l-Esîr, *el-Kâmil*, X, s.176; Sadru'd-dîn el-Huseynî, *Ahbâru'd-devleti's-Selçukiyye*, trans. Necati Lügal, Ankara 1943, p.45; Ebu'l-Fazl el-Beyhakî, *Târîh-i Beyhakî*, p.76; İbn Kesîr, *el-Bidâye ve'n-nihâye fi't-târîh*, XII, p.277; Münecimbaşı Ahmed b. Lutfullâh, *Câmiu'd-duvel: Selçuklular Tarihi I: Horasan-Irak, Kirman ve Suriye Selçukluları*, edited by ve trans. Ali Öngül, İzmir 2000, p.61; M. Th. Houtsma, "The Death of Nizam al-Mulk and its Consequences", *Journal of Indian History*, III/2, 8

mains unclear, resulted in considerable disorder within the state. At the same time, the relationship between Malik-Shah and the Caliph al-Muqtadi bi-Amr Allah deteriorated. The sultan promptly ordered the caliph to depart from Baghdad. The caliph was issued with a ten-day deadline to depart, a request which the sultan endorsed. Nevertheless, just one day prior to the end of the deadline, Malik-Shah was assassinated during a hunting expedition near Baghdad on the evening of Friday, 15 Shawwal 485 AH / 18–19 November 1092 CE.[21] Malik-Shah's body was taken to the capital, Isfahan, and laid to rest in the Medrese-yi Celâlî, which he had commissioned.[22]

The two-decade reign of Sultan Malik-Shah signifies the "Golden Age" of the Seljuk Empire. During this era, the Seljuk state evolved into a "world empire" that spanned from China to the Mediterranean. Through the acquisition of control over trade routes, the state attained the zenith of its economic influence. A dedicated hunter possessing a significant interest in poetry and literature, the sultan served as a patron to poets and scholars while also occasionally penning Persian poems himself. Through the madrasas he constructed and the observatory he founded, he made substantial contributions to the progression of science and culture. The calendar he developed, informed by extensive observations (the Jalali Calendar), along with the compilations of laws he wrote, remained in use in periods to come. His

(1924), p.147-148; İ. Kafesoğlu, *Sultan Melikşah*, p.203-204, n. 17; İbrahim Kafesoğlu, "Nizâmülmülk", *İA*, IX, p.332-333; Abdükerim Özaydın, *Sultan Berkyaruk Devri Selçuklu Tarihi (485-498/102-1104)*, Istanbul 2001, p.8-10. Nizâmu'l-Mulk'ün naaşı İsfahân'a nakledilerek Karân (bugünkü Ahmedâbâd) mahallesinde defnedilmiştir (Hindûşâh b. Sencer-i Nahcevânî, *Tecâribu's-selef*, edited by 'Abbas İkbâl, Tahran 1357/1978, p.280; *el-Muhtârât*, p.243, 465-466; Hosein Mirjafarî, "İsfahan'da Bulunan Melikşah, Nizamü'l-Mülk ve Diğer Selçuklu Hükümdarlarının Mezarları Hakkında İzâhat", *XII. Türk Tarih Kongresi: Kongreye Sunulan Bildiriler*, Ankara 1999, II, p.620-626).

21 'Azîmî, *Azimî Tarihi*, p.28; Bundârî, *Zubdetu'n-nusra ve nuhbetu'l-usra*, p.69-83; İbnu'l-Cevzî/Sevim, p.74-75; İbnu'l-Esîr, *el-Kâmil*, X, p.181; Ebu'l-Ferec, *Abu'l-Farac Tarihi*, I, p.334; Zehebî, *Târîhu'l-İslâm ve vefeyâtu'l-meşâhîr ve a'lâm*, edited by Beşşâr Avvad Ma'rûf, X, Beyrut 1424/2003, p.554.

22 *Mucmelu't-tevârîh ve'l-kisas: Eine persische Weltgeschichte aus dem 12. Jahrhundert, nach den Hss.Heidelberg, Berlin, Dublin und Paris*, edited by Seyfeddin Najmabadi-Siegfried Weber, Edingen-Neckarhausen 2000, p.312; Hindûşâh b. Sencer-i Nahcevânî, *Tecâribu's-selef*, p.282; Hamdullâh Mustevfî-yi Kazvînî, *Târîh-i guzîde*, edited by 'Abdu'l-Huseyn Nevâ'î, Tahran 1364/1985, p.439; Nûrullah Kesâî, *Medâris-i Nizâmiyye*, p.220; H. Mirjafarî, "İsfahan'da Bulunan Melikşah, Nizamü'l-Mülk ve Diğer Selçuklu Hükümdarlarının Mezarları Hakkında İzâhat", p.620-626.



equitable and tolerant governance was lauded not only in Islamic texts but also in accounts from non-Muslim sources.[23]

Following the murder of Malik-Shah, his spouse Terken Hatun sought to elevate their son Mahmud to the throne, despite his tender age of four and a half years. Malik-Shah's eldest son, Berkyaruk, refused to accept this. In the subsequent conflict, Terken Hatun suggested marrying Ismail, the son of Malik-Shah's uncle and the ruler of Ganja, thereby denoting him as regent. A succession dispute ensued between Berkyaruk and Ismail, and Berkyaruk ultimately prevailed. Subsequently, Terken Hatun extended an invitation to Malik-Shah's brother, Tutuş, the governor of Syria, to visit Isfahan, with a proposal of marriage. Following the death of Malik-Shah, Tutuş proclaimed his own sultanate and asserted his claim to the throne.[24] As Tutush persisted in his campaign along this trajectory, first Terken Hatun and subsequently Mahmud, who succumbed to smallpox, passed away (487/1094). Following Mahmud's demise, Berkyaruk was proclaimed sultan. Following Tutush's defeat and death in battle, Berkyaruk effectively solidified his hold on the Seljuk throne. Nonetheless, the incomplete establishment of central authority was due to persistent uprisings.

The most important occurrence during the reign of Sultan Berkyaruk (1092–1104) was the arrival of the Crusader forces in Syria. During his confrontation with the Crusaders, Berkyaruk encountered a rebellion incited by his brother, Muhammad Tapar, in 492 AH / 1099 CE. This revolt, which lasted for a long period, greatly impacted the Seljuk state. The competition for the throne between the two brothers concluded in 497 AH / 1104 CE with the formal partitioning of the empire into two divisions.[25] Nevertheless, this circumstance was short-lived. Shortly subsequent to the treaty's conclusion, Berkyaruk became ill and passed away on 2 Rabi' al-Thani 498 AH / December 22, 1104. Berkyaruk, who died at the age of twenty-four, was buried in Isfahan in the mausoleum of his father, Malik-Shah.

Berkyaruk was embroiled in the succession dispute for the throne and confronted uprisings from individuals within the dynasty. Consequently, he found it

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23 Bk. Vardan, "Türk Fütuhatı Tarihi", p.183; Urfalı Mateos, *Urfalı Mateos Vekayi-nâmesi (952-1136) ve Papaz Grigor'un Zeyli (1136-1162)*, p.176, 178.

24 İbnu'l-Esîr, *el-Kâmil,* X, p.188; Ali Sevim, *Suriye ve Filistin Selçukluları Tarihi*, Ankara 1989, p.137-138.

25 Sadru'd-dîn el-Huseynî, *Ahbâru'd-devleti's-Selcûkiyye*, p.54; İbnu'l-Esîr, *el-Kâmil*, X, p.300-301; A. Özaydın, *Sultan Berkyaruk*, p.79-80; O. G. Özgüdenli, *Selçuklular*, I, p.216.

challenging to effectively deal with the Crusaders as an external threat, and the increasingly formidable Ismailis as an internal threat.

Shortly prior to his demise, Sultan Berkyaruk had chosen his son, Malik-Shah, as his successor. Following Berkyaruk's death, a sermon was delivered in Baghdad in the name of Malik-Shah. Nonetheless, Muhammad Tapar rejected this and marginalized Malik-Shah, thereby assuming the Great Seljuk throne without contest.

Upon the ascension of Sultan Muhammad Tapar (1105-1118) to the throne, one of the most pressing issues was the Ismaili matter. Ismailism, which originates as a branch of Shia Islam, is frequently referred to as Batiniyya due to its assertion that every ostensible (zāhir) meaning possesses a concealed (bāṭin) significance, and that the Qur'an and hadiths can only be comprehended through esoteric interpretation (ta'wil). The visibility of the Ismailis during the Seljuk era commenced with Hasan Sabbāh (d. 518/1124). Hasan Sabbāh, who garnered significant support particularly from disaffected urban populations, succeeded in taking the Alamut Castle situated in the Elburz Mountains in 480/1087. Consequently, due to assassinations carried out by Ismaili fida'is, numerous Seljuk emirs and statesmen met their demise. At first, the assassination of Vizier Nizāmu'l-Mulk and subsequently the unexpected death of Sultan Melikshāh foiled efforts to combat the Ismailis. During the reign of Sultan Berkyaruk, internal conflicts hindered a concerted effort against the Ismailis. Muhammad Tapar, known for implementing severe measures in his campaign against the Ismailis, succeeded in significantly mitigating the faction's expansion, though he was unable to eradicate their activities completely.

Sultan Muhammad Tapar was additionally engaged in another significant matter: the conflict with the Crusaders. He managed this conflict through the emirs he designated in the territories of Syria and Mosul.

Throughout his roughly fourteen-year reign, Muhammad Tapar faced challenges stemming from internal dynastic disputes and rebellions, as well as external threats from Crusaders, Ismailis, and Georgians. In the face of these adversities, the sultan also undertook significant urban development initiatives, culminating in the completion of the Sultan Mosque in Isfahan, a project commenced by his predecessor, while also commissioning the development of water canals and founding a madrasa and a ribat for Sufi practitioners.[26] Muhammad Tapar, who passed away on 24

[26] George Makdisi, "Les rapports entre calife et sultân à l'époque saljūqide", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, VI/2 (1975), p.236; Hamdullâh Mustevfî-yi Kazvînî, *Nuzhetu'l-kulûb*, edited by Guy le Strange, London-Leiden 1915, p.49; Abdülkerim Özaydın,



Dhu al-Hijjah 511 / 17 April 1118, was only thirty-seven years old at the time of his death. In historical sources, the sultan is praised for his noble character and bravery.

Following the death of Muhammad Tapar, his eldest son, Mahmud (1118–1131), came to the throne. Nonetheless, Mahmud's authority was not recognized by his uncle, Sultan Sanjar of Khorasan. Commanding a fierce army in a westward direction, Sanjar successfully defeated the forces of his nephew, Mahmud, at Saveh in the year 513/1119. Following this, Sanjar granted amnesty to Mahmud and arranged his marriage to his daughter, Māh-melek Hatun, instating him as the Seljuk Sultan of Iraq, contingent upon his loyalty.[27] Mahmud remained loyal to his uncle Sanjar throughout his reign as the head of the Seljuk Sultanate of Iraq until his death in 525/1131.

Sultan Sanjar (1118–1157), who made Merv his capital, governed the western part of the empire through the Seljuk Sultanate of Iraq (1119–1194). After this period, the sultan refrained from interfering in western affairs unless absolutely necessary and spent most of his time tackling with eastern issues. Nevertheless, during Sanjar's reign, Seljuk authority in the west faced two significant challenges. The first was the succession disputes among Seljuk family members vying for the throne of the Seljuk Sultanate of Iraq; the second was the Abbasid caliphs' attempts to seize political power.

Caliph al-Mustarshid Billāh (1118–1135), taking advantage of the internal struggles among the Iraqi Seljuk princes, sought to seize political authority. In 529/1135, in a battle fought near Hamadān, the caliph was defeated and taken captive by the Iraqi Seljuk Sultan Masʿūd (1134–1152). Subsequently, Sultan Sanjar intervened directly in the matter through an envoy he dispatched. In a letter addressed to his nephew Masʿūd, Sanjar ordered that the caliph be released immediately and sent back to Baghdad. It appears that, at precisely this juncture, a second embassy arrived from Sanjar, during which al-Mustarshid Billāh was assassinated by a group

Sultan Muhammed Tapar Devri Selçuklu Tarhi (498-511/1105-1118), Ankara 1990, p.150, 152.

27 *Mucmelu't-tevârîh ve'l-kisas*, p.318; Zahîru'd-dîn-i Nîşâbûrî, *Selçûk-nâme*, p.54; İbnu'l-Esîr, *el-Kâmil*, X, p.437-438; Ca'fer b. Muhammed b. Hasan-ı Ca'ferî, *Târîh-i Yezd*, edited by Îrec Afşâr, Tahran 1343/1965, p.37; Ahmed b. Huseyn b. 'Alî-yi Kâtib, *Târîh-i cedîd-i Yezd*, edited by Îrec Afşâr, Tahran 1386/2007, p.61; Hüseyin Kayhan, *Irak Selçukluları*, Konya 2001, p.42-43.

of Bāṭinīs who had infiltrated the delegation.[28] Following al-Mustarshid, his son al-Rāshid Billāh (1135–1136, d. 532/1138) likewise entered into a conflict with the Seljuks—one that would ultimately cost him his life.

In Sencer's foreign policy, the eastern region occupied first place. The Sultan aimed to encircle the eastern regions of the nation with a protective buffer formed by subordinate states. In this context, he initiated distinct campaigns against the Karakhanids and the Ghaznavids, ultimately subjugating them under his authority. Subsequently, in 533/1138, he led a military campaign against Atsız, the sovereign of Khwarezm who had revoked his loyalty, ultimately inflicting a significant defeat upon him. Nevertheless, following Sencer's return to Khorasan, Atsız managed to reestablish authority over Khwarezm.[29]

A critical turning point in Sultan Sencer's reign was the Battle of Qatwan, which he fought against the Kara-Khitan. This conflict occurred on 5 Safar 536 / 9 September 1141 in the steppes of Qatwan, situated northeast of Samarkand, involving two substantial armies of approximately comparable size. The conflict culminated in an unequivocal defeat of the Seljuk forces. The setback at Qatwan, which garnered considerable attention across the Islamic world, significantly impaired Sencer's reputation, previously characterized by successive victories, and established the foundation for the eventual disintegration of the Great Seljuk Empire.

Taking advantage of Sultan Sencer's defeat at Qatwan, Khwarazmshah Atsiz sought to invade Khorasan. Following substantial endeavours, Sencer reconstructed his military and reasserted dominion over Khorasan. In 538/1143, he initiated a second campaign against Atsiz. Atsiz committed his loyalty to Sencer, which led to the sultan's return to Merv. Nonetheless, subsequent to Atsiz's assassination of the envoy dispatched by the sultan, Sencer initiated his third campaign

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28 This assassination has been examined in all its aspects in the following study: Osman G. Özgüdenli, "Selçuklu Hilâfet Münasebetlerinde Bir Dönüm Noktası: Halife el-Musterşid'in Katli Meselesi", *İ.Ü. Edebiyat Fakültesi Tarih Dergisi,* 39 (2004), p.1-35.

29 In Sultan Sanjar's conquest of Khorezm, the causes and development of the war are explained in every aspect (see *Ahkâmu sultâni'l-mâzî*, Kitâbhâne-yi Dânişgâh-i Tahran, Mikrofilm, nr. 2258, vr. 143b-145b; V. V. Barthold, *Turkestan v epuhu mongolskogo mesestvia*, I, St. Petersburg 1898, p.44-47. For a critique of the document see Mehmet Altay Köymen, "Selçuklu Devri Kaynaklarına Dair Araştırmalar I, Büyük Selçuklu İmparatoru Melikşâh Devrine Dair Bir Eser Münasebetiyle", *Belleten*, XVII/68 (1953), p.587-588; Mehmet Altay Köymen, *Büyük Selçuklu İmparatorluğu Tarihi: İkinci İmparatorluk Devri*, V, Ankara 1991, p.317-319; İbrahim Kafesoğlu, *Hârezmşahlar Devleti Tarihi (485-618/1092-1221)*, Ankara 1992, p.47).



towards Khwarazm in 542/1147. In this instance, Atsız pursued reconciliation and acknowledged the authority of the sultan.

At the onset of Sultan Sencer's reign, the Ghurids, previously subjected to Seljuk authority, seceded after the Battle of Qatwan. In 547/1152, Sencer initiated a campaign against the Ghurids and attained a noteworthy victory. This victory temporarily revitalized the Seljuk state's diminished power and authority within the region.

The Oghuz rebellion that occurred during the concluding years of Sencer's reign facilitated the dissolution of the Great Seljuk Empire. A minor conflict in 548/1153 involving Seljuk tax authorities and the Oghuz incrementally intensified, leading Sencer to mobilize a substantial army to assert control over the Oghuz. Nevertheless, the Oghuz inflicted a significant defeat on the forces of the Great Seljuk Empire and took Sencer as a prisoner.[30]

After enduring three years of captivity, Sencer successfully escaped from the Oghuz in 551/1156. In response to news of his liberation, certain subordinate states reaffirmed their loyalty. Nevertheless, the fervent aspirations of the Seljuk commanders hindered the aging monarch from revitalizing the collapsing state. Furthermore, the sultan lacked a male heir to succeed him in his role. Ultimately, with the demise of Sencer in Rabi' al-Awwal 552/April-May 1157, the Great Seljuk Empire concluded.[31] The sultan's remains were interred in the grand mausoleum he had commissioned during his lifetime in Merv, known as the "dāru'l-ākhirah" or "devlet-hāne." This monumental tomb still stands today as one of the most magnificent examples of medieval Islamic architecture.[32]

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30 Bundârî, *Zubdetu'n-nusra ve nuhbetu'l-usra*, p.252-253; İbnu'l-Esîr, *el-Kâmil*, XI, p.154-155.

31 O. G. Özgüdenli, *Selçuklular*, I, s.284; Ergin Ayan, *Büyük Selçuklu İmparatorluğu'nda Oğuz İsyanı*, Istanbul 2007, p.40, n. 31.

32 Yâkût al-Hamawî records that the blue tiles on the dome of the mausoleum can be seen from a day's journey to Merv. (*Mu'cemu'l-buldân*, edited by F. Wüstenfeld, IV/1, Leipzig 1867, p.509). Sultan For the tomb of Sanjar, see.Yüksel Sayan, *Türkmenistan'daki Mimari Eserler (XI-XVI. Yüzyıl)*, Ankara 1999, p.91-99; V. I. Pilyavskiy, "Pamyatniki arhitekturı oazisa drevnigo Merva", *Pamyatniki Arhitekturı Turkmenistana*, ed. A. Karriyev, Leningrad 1974, p.144-150; D. Brandenburg-K. Brüsehoff, *Die Seldschuken. Baukunst des Islam in Persien und Turkmenien*, Graz 1980, p.55-58; Oktay Aslanapa, *Türk Sanatı*, I-II, Istanbul 1984, p.78-81; Mustafa Cezar, *Anadolu Öncesi Türkler'de Şehir ve Mimarlık*, Istanbul 1979, p.317-324; Yaşar Çoruhlu, "Sultan Sancar'ın Türbesinin İçerisinde Bulunduğu Tarihî Doku", *Uluslararası Dördüncü Türk Kültürü Kongresi, Bildiriler 4-7 Kasım 1997*, ed. A.

Sencer, regarded as one of the most important rulers of the Seljuk dynasty and commemorated with sermons in his name in numerous locations even a year following his death, exhibited a deep appreciation for poetry and literature.[33] He supported scholars and literary figures, welcomed poets into his court, and at times crafted Persian poetry himself. His era was characterized by one of the most prominent periods in Iranian literature. Over his four-decade reign, the Seljuk state, which had been adversely affected by succession conflicts, restored its prominence and fundamentally entered a "second era of prosperity."

Social, Economic and Cultural Life

As was characteristic of medieval Islamic states, in the Great Seljuk Empire, the general population, excluding the privileged classes that benefited from the state treasury, was categorized as re'âyâ (the subjects). The definition of the re'aya is explicitly articulated in the official documents of the era, along with political and ethical discourses. According to this historically and sociological perspective, the re'âyâ were required to fulfil their tax obligations, adhere to religious principles, and respect the authority of the state and its representatives.[34] It was regarded as a serious transgression for the re'âyâ to affiliate with religious organizations not officially acknowledged by the state, to possess differing beliefs, to disrupt public order and security, or to defy directives issued by authorities. As such actions were considered detrimental to the treasury, participation in disputes among rulers was likewise regarded as unsuitable. Nevertheless, the re'âyâ had the option to engage voluntarily in military endeavours when a jihad was proclaimed against non-Muslims or in frontier areas.[35]

Aktaş Yasa, I, Ankara 1999, p.191-204; *Sultan Sancar Türbesi*, haz. Tayfun Atmaca, Ankara 2004, p.103-260.

33 For the publication and translation of his poetry refer to Osman G. Özgüdenli, "Büyük Selçuklu Sultanlarına Ait Farsça Şiirler", *Marmara Türkiyat Araştırmaları Dergis*i, I/2 (2015), p.4246; Osman G. Özgüdenli, *Ortaçağ'da Türkler, Moğollar, İranlılar (Kaynaklar ve Araştırmalar)*, Istanbul 2020, p.148-151.

34 Osman G. Özgüdenli, "Selçuklu Çağında Kırsal Hayat: Göçebeler ve Köylüler", *Selçuklu Tarihi El Kitabı*, ed. Refik Turan, Ankara 2012, p.555-563.

35 M. Fuad Köprülü, "Hârizmşâhlar", *İA*, V/1, p.277, 283.



In return, the ruler was obliged, much like a shepherd, to protect the lives, property, and honour of the *re'âyâ*.[36] In numerous official documents, the improvement of the *re'âyâ*'s condition was regarded as one of the principal matters of religion and state.[37] Bureaucrats and emirs were explicitly and unequivocally commanded to treat the *re'âyâ*, as entrusted by God, with justice, to protect their interests, and to refrain from making excessive and unjust demands that contravened the law.[38]

The term re'âyâ, which denotes individuals who did not receive advantages from the state treasury yet were required to fulfil tax obligations, should be interpreted exclusively as an administrative classification. Certainly, among this extensive group—politically and legally uniform—there were classes that varied markedly in economic and social dimensions.[39]

Within the Seljuk Empire State and society consisted of three primary groups whose lifestyles, social and economic frameworks, and productive pursuits exhibited significant differences: nomads, peasants, and urban residents.

While certain sedentary groups were present, a considerable segment of the Turks who crossed the Oxus River (Amu Darya) in large numbers and entered the Iranian plateau was comprised of nomads.[40] It is noteworthy that in an anonymous interlinear Oghuz Turkish glossary, likely composed in the early 14th century in the Anatolian region, the term "Türk" was used to mean 'villager, nomad, rural person, one living away from the city, residing in a tent or hut,' while the

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36 On this point see Fahru'd-dîn Mubârekşâh, *Târîh*, edited by E. Denison Ross, *Ta'rîh-i Fakhru'd-dîn Mubârekşâh*, London 1927, p.12-17. Keza bk. *Bahru'l-fevâ'id*, edited by Muhammed Takî Dânişpejûh, Tahran 1345/1966, p.427-438.

37 Muntecebu'd-dîn Bedî'el-Cuveynî, *'Atabetu'l-ketebe*, edited by Mîrzâ Muhammed Kazvînî-'Abbâs İkbâl, Tahran 1329/1950, p.55.

38 Muntecebu'd-dîn Bedî'el-Cuveynî, *'Atabetu'l-ketebe*, p.20, 23-24, 29, 41, 56.

39 M. F. Köprülü, "Hârizmşâhlar", *İA*, V/1, p.283.

40 For studies on Seljuk nomads, see Sergey Grigorievich Agadjanov, Selğukiden und Turkmenien im 11–12. Jahrhundert, German trans. Reinhold Schletzer (Hamburg, 1990); David Durand-Guédy, "The Türkmen-Saljūq Relationship in Twelfth-Century Iran: New Elements Based on Contrastive Analysis of Three Inšā' Documents," Eurasian Studies 9, nos. 1–2 (2011): 11–66; M. Said Polat, Selçuklu Göçerlerinin Dünyası (Istanbul, 2004); Andrew C. S. Peacock, Early Seljūk History: A New Interpretation (London, 2010); Andrew C. S. Peacock, "Nomadic Society and the Seljūq Campaigns in Caucasia," Iran and the Caucasus 9, no. 2 (2005): 205–229; D. T. Potts, Nomads in Iran: From Antiquity to the Modern Era (New York, 2014), 157–187.

term "Türklik" denoted 'village dwelling, rural life, and tent life.'[41]A considerable percentage of the nomadic Turkic groups that migrated into the Iranian region was comprised of tribes associated with the Oghuz clans. Nevertheless, specific philological evidence suggests that, although to a reduced degree, additional Turkish groups, including the Uighurs, Karluks, and Kipchaks, migrated to Iranian territories in conjunction with the Oghuz during the Seljuk era.[42]

Nomadic tribes can be categorised into a diverse array of large and small clans. Each clan was administered by its hereditary leader, referred to as "beg" or "bey." The clans possessed differing statuses in their relationship with the state, characterized by differences in the type and quantity of taxes they contributed. The nomadic populations involved in animal husbandry were required to remit a specific pasture tax to the state in exchange for access to grazing lands. From the central authority, an official designated as the şahne (şihne), tasked with upholding order and security, was appointed to oversee the tribes.[43] The şahne governed the interaction between the central administration and the tribes, additionally distributing pastures and water resources to each clan leader based on the population size of their family and retinue. Given that the leaders of the principal tribes showed true loyalty to the ruler, the administrative system's engagement with them was markedly restricted.[44]

The nomadic groups actively identified the areas within the Iranian landscape that best accommodated their lifestyle. The warm and arid conditions of southern Iran were unattractive to the nomadic Turkish tribes, who were more acclimated to the rigorous climate of the Eurasian steppes. The Kerman Seljuk sovereign Kavurd Bey remarked: "I am of Turkish descent; neither the high temperatures nor their effects are conducive to the well-being of myself or my troops.""[45] Furthermore, the humid environment, substantial precipitation, and extensive forestation of the area situated between the Caspian Sea and the Alborz Mountains—encompassing Tabaristan, Mazandaran, Ruyan, and Gilan—rendered it incompatible and

41 *Eski Oğuzca Sözlük. Bahşayiş Lügati*, ed. Fikret Turan, Istanbul 2001, p.105, n. 121, 169.

42 For an example in Uyghur see Gerhard Doerfer, "Ein uigurischer Text aus Iran vom Jahre 1207", *Turcica*, XIII (1981), p.153-169.

43 Muntecebu'd-dîn Bedî' el-Cuveynî, *'Atabetu'l-ketebe*, p.80-82, 84-85.

44 Osman G. Özgüdenli, "Selçuklular, I. Büyük Selçuklular, B. Sosyoekonomik ve Kültürel Hayat", *DİA*, XXXVI, p.372.

45 Osman G. Özgüdenli, *Turco-Iranica: Ortaçağ Türk-İran Tarihi Araştırmaları*, Istanbul 2006, s.25.



impossible for the nomadic existence of the Turkmens. As a result, the nomadic Turks primarily resided in the eastern and northern sectors of Khorasan, the southern foothills of the Alborz Mountains, and the northwestern territory of Persian Iraq (Irak-ı Acem), which represented the most optimal regions for their lifestyle within the Iranian geographical landscape. Nonetheless, no area in Iran appeared as appealing to the nomadic Turks—who desired elevated terrains, ample waterways, and expansive pastures—as the geographical landscape of Azerbaijan.[46]

The primary economic occupation of the nomads was animal husbandry. When the Oghuz migrated into the Iranian geography, they brought their herds of livestock along with them.[47] Their most esteemed assets were their flocks of sheep, succeeded by horses. An Armenian source indicates that Seljuk warhorses elicited admiration due to their robust hooves and exceptional speed reminiscent of an eagle. As Türkmen horses exhibited distinct characteristics in terms of size and type when compared to other breeds, they were often marketed at significantly elevated prices. These horses are characterized in historical texts as exhibiting a "wind-like" agility.[48] In addition to horses, the nomadic peoples were also recognized for rearing substantial, two-humped camels. The modern Ghaznavid writer Abu'l-Fazl-i Beyhakī's description of the Turkmens as "camel herders" not only denotes a pejorative attitude but also highlights the considerable importance of camels within their assets. As camels require a more arid and warmer environment in contrast to horses and sheep, the Turkmen people engaged in long migrations that reached the outer perimeters of the desert. Moreover, the sources also mention that animals such as goats, cattle, and oxen, albeit to a lesser extent, were owned by the Turkmen people.

The main products obtained from nomadic animal husbandry encompassed meat, milk, wool, and leather. Wool was specifically employed in the production of items such as felt, woollen apparel, and carpets, which possessed significant value

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46 For the climatic characteristics of Azerbaijan geography, see Muhammed Hasan-i Gencî, "Âzerbâycân, II. Cografîyâ-yi tabi'î", *Dâ'iretu'l-Ma'ârif-i Bozorg-i İslâmî*, II (1367/1988), p.207-219.

47 Gerdîzî, *Zeynu'l-ahbâr*, edited by 'Abdu'l-hayy Habîbî, Tahran 1363/1984, p.441.

48 Horses during the Seljukid period have been examined by the following studies: Marit Kretschmar, *Pferd und Reiter im Orient. Unterschungen zur Reiterkultur Vorderasiens in der Seldschukenzeit*, Hildesheim-New York 1980; Osman G. Özgüdenli-Alime Gül, "Selçuklu Anadolusu'nda At", *Prof. Dr. Abdülkerim Özaydın'a Armağan*, ed. E. Altan-M. Kesik-M. Öztürk, Istanbul 2020, p.616-657.

as trade commodities. In addition to the raising of livestock, hunting likewise constituted an integral aspect of the nomadic economy. Birds of prey, including eagles, hawks, and falcons, were frequently bred for the purpose of hunting. For marginalized nomadic populations, hunting possessed profound importance. However, it is recognized that hunting did not represent a separate or significant sector within the economic framework of nomadic Turkmen communities.

The military achievements of the Seljuks enabled the migration of additional Turkmen tribes into the Iranian territories. The movement of these substantial nomadic populations into established areas resulted in considerable disruption to both village and urban life. The Seljuk-period poet ‘Am‘ak-i Buhârî, in his eulogy written for Sultan Alp-Arslan, highlighted the destruction caused by the Turkmens in Iran, observing that the region was undergoing restoration and revitalization under the reign of the “fortunate shah.”[49]

Owing to their distaste for sedentary life, Turkmen tribes were either kept to the east of Khurasan by the Seljuk sultans or guided toward Byzantium through Azerbaijan in a manner designed to minimize detriment to the state economy and urban culture. The Seljuks’ defensive posture regarding the “established” Iranian culture and urban existence, as contrasted with their nomadic relatives, elicited dissatisfaction among the Turkmens and established the foundation for their subsequent resistance to the Seljuk state. The Seljuk dynasty’s inclination to maintain a sedentary lifestyle in contrast to that of their Turkmen relatives had a significant influence, as evidenced by Ebu’l-Gāzī Bahādur Khan’s severe criticism nearly five centuries later: “The Seljuks were Turkmens.” Although they asserted their familial relationship as siblings, they contributed no benefit to the state or its citizens. Prior to their ascension to the sultanship, they indicated that we belonged to the Kınık tribe of Turkmens.”[50] The Seljuks’ cautionary stance towards sedentary life played an instrumental role in the Oghuz rebellion during Sultan Sanjar’s reign and subsequently in the devastation of Khurasan.[51]

On the other hand, the Seljuk sultans appeared to be quite displeased with the damage caused by the large nomadic tribes to village and urban life. Some entries

[49] ‘Am‘ak-i Buhârî, *Dîvân*, edited by Sa‘îd-i Nefîsî, Tahran (date unknown), p.188.

[50] O. G. Özgüdenli, *Turco-Iranica: Ortaçağ Türk-İran Tarihi Araştırmaları*, p.25.

[51] Enverî, *Dîvân*, *Kasâ’id*, edited by Muhammed Takî Muderris-i Rezevî, I, Tahran 1337/1959, p.201-205; Hâkânî-yi Şirvânî, *Dîvân*, edited by Cihângîr Mansûr, Tahran 1375/1996, p.105-107, 179-180.



in the *Siyāsat-nāmeh*, written by the Seljuk vizier Nizām al-Mulk, clearly reveals his displeasure on this issue: "Although the Turkmens have caused difficulties for the state and their numbers are great..."[52] Nonetheless, the Seljuks' strategy of orienting the Turkmens towards the west enabled their establishment in the Azerbaijan and Anatolian areas, which possessed a climate conducive to their lifestyle as a highly advantageous summer-winter pasture (yaylak-kışlak), thereby facilitating their integration into their new homeland.

The nomadic Turkmens, residing in diverse large and small tribes characterized by a yaylak-kışlak (seasonal pasture) lifestyle, had established themselves within the Seljuk State in territories most conducive to their way of life: the eastern sector of Khurasan, the southern foothills of the Alborz Mountains, the north-western area of Iraq-i Ajam, the Mosul-Kirkuk region, and the Azerbaijan territory. Initially, these regions, distinguished by vast pastures, were favored by the Turkmen population for their nomadic lifestyle; nevertheless, it has become apparent over time that they have progressively adopted a sedentary existence. This phenomenon of sedentarization advanced swiftly in the ensuing periods and ultimately exerted a considerable influence on the Turkification of the Azerbaijan region.[53]

During the Great Seljuk period, the majority of the population were peasants residing in rural villages. During the emergence of the state, the substantial migration of various Oghuz tribes tended to adversely affect the agricultural peasantry in Khurasan and Central Iran, regions characterized by a feudal system with ingrained traditions. Furthermore, the Seljuk-Ghaznavid conflicts resulted in considerable harm to agricultural activities in the region of Khurasan. Abu'l-Hasan al-Bayhaqi observes that in Beyhaq and its vicinity, where pistachio trees were plentiful, the Ghaznavid commander Emir Hajib Subashi collected pistachio wood and transported it on camels during the winter months, recognizing its suitability for burning, and transported it to the city of Ghazni.[54] In the Seljuk State, the living standards of the peasantry could improve only following the establishment of political stability and the effective implementation of the iqtaʿ system.

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52 Nizâmu'l-Mulk, *Siyeru'l-mulk yâ Siyâset-nâme*, edited by Hubert Darke, Tahran 1372/1994, p.139.

53 Osman G. Özgüdenli, "Selçuklular, V. Irak Selçukluları, B. Sosyoekonomik ve Kültürel Hayat", *DİA*, XXXVI, p.388; Osman G. Özgüdenli, "İskân. Selçuklular", *DİA*, Ek I, p.657.

54 Ebu'l-Hasan 'Alî b. Zeyd Beyhakî, *Târîh-i Beyhak*, edited by Ahmed Behmenyâr, Tahran (tarihsiz)², p.273.

The legal and economic status of peasants demonstrated considerable variations in accordance with the geographical regions they occupied. Nevertheless, such disparities occasionally persisted among peasants residing in the same geographical area. Affluent families referred to as dihqans, who possessed vast areas of land in villages before the Seljuk era, successfully preserved their privileged status throughout the Seljuk period. Within the agrarian population, minor landowners constituted the predominant group, accompanied by landless laborers and sharecroppers. Occasionally, in small towns and manorial estates, affluent farmers were present who had opted to retire from state service, comprising former officials and military veterans. Nevertheless, having departed from state employment, these individuals were subsequently classified as members of the re'āya class.[55]

The land was divided into categories such as *harâcî, öşrî,* and *emîrî*. The *emîrî* lands, which belonged to the treasury and were administered in large *iktâ'* estates, were fragmented into cavalry fiefs (dirliks) during Nizâm al-Mulk's time. According to the *Siyâset-nâme*, under this system,[56] both the land and the people working on it remained under state control as before. The peasants who cultivated the land held onto it through temporary tenure and only on the condition of cultivation. If a peasant died, the land passed to his male heir. The peasant did not pay taxes on the produce directly to the state treasury but instead delivered the region's taxes to the *muktâ'*—the holder of the *iktâ'*—who was granted the land in exchange for service. If the land was endowed as a vakf, taxes were paid to the respective foundation. The iktâ' grants to commanders and notables were given only in return for service, and when the iktâ' holder was dismissed from service, the iktâ' was revoked. Upon the death or succession of the ruler, all iktâ' charters were renewed under the new ruler's name.

The population associated with the land enjoyed legal freedom, akin to that of individuals residing in urban areas. Provided that they actively cultivated the land, they were entitled to transfer their right to work the land to their successors via inheritance. Under no circumstances may the iktâ' holder (mukta') require from the populace an amount exceeding the pre-established, fixed tax rate. As expressly outlined in the Siyâset-nâme, the populace consistently possessed the entitlement to

[55] M. F. Köprülü, "Hârizmşâhlar", *İA*, V/1, p.284.

[56] Nizâmu'l-Mulk, *Siyâset-nâme*, p.43.



petition the court—specifically the sultan or the "great divan."[57] If the iktâ' holder failed to comply with the laws, their iktâ' would be confiscated.

The fundamental component of the Seljuk tax system consisted of taxes imposed on agricultural output. The establishment and functioning of novel agricultural enterprises led to the development of a distinct corpus of agricultural law. Scholars from Khorasan and Iraq gathered to reformulate regional practices and contemporary agricultural concerns in alignment with the tenets of Islamic jurisprudence. Consequently, a novel legal structure was established in the agricultural sector, which maintained its efficacy for approximately two centuries until the reforms enacted by Ghazan Khan during the Ilkhanate era.[58]

During the Great Seljuk era, agricultural practices relied on a sophisticated irrigation system with roots extending to much earlier periods. Watercourses were bifurcated into canals, and optimal utilization of each stream was thereby facilitated. The governance and allocation of water resources were overseen by an official designated as the mîr-âb. As per one account, the quantity of staff operating under the mîr-âb in Merv and its vicinity alone amounted to as high as 12,000.[59] During the reigns of Sultan Malik-Shah and Sultan Sanjar, new irrigation canals were constructed in Iraq, Khurasan, and Khwarazm with the aim of increasing agricultural productivity.

The augmentation of irrigation practices and the advancement of irrigated agriculture during the Great Seljuk era resulted in a considerable enhancement of agricultural output throughout the Iranian plateau. This increase in production facilitated not only the enlargement of rural communities but also the development of urban centers and the advancement of commercial activities. In Khurasan, the agricultural yield from the Merv plains, especially irrigated by the Murgab canal, significantly contributed to the population and development of the area. The cultivation of cotton in this region facilitated the progression of textile manufacturing in nearby towns and cities.

Notwithstanding regional variations in agricultural output, the most frequently cultivated crops throughout the Great Seljuk territories encompassed wheat, barley,

57 Nizâmu'l-Mulk, *Siyâset-nâme*, p.43.

58 Osman G. Özgüdenli, *Moğol İranında Gelenek ve Değişim: Gâzân Han ve Reformları (1295-1304)*, Istanbul 2009, p.327, 332, n. 661.

59 Hâfiz-i Ebrû, *Cogrâfîyâ-yi târîhî-yi Horâsân der târîh-i Hâfîz-i Ebrû*, edited by Gulâm-Rizâ Verehrâm, Tahran 1370/1991, p.39.

rye, oats, rice, broad beans, beans, chickpeas, and lentils. Among the primary fruits and vegetables were dates, grapes, quinces, apples, pomegranates, plums, peaches, apricots, figs, mulberries, walnuts, olives, almonds, hazelnuts, pistachios, melons, cucumbers, squash, eggplants, radishes, onions, garlic, and turnips.[60]

Urban residents represented the third significant social group within Great Seljuk society. Derived from a nomadic heritage, the Seljuks successfully established their state in Khurasan—a region renowned for its longstanding urban culture—only after implementing a policy focused on the preservation of sedentary life and urban civilization. The inaugural capital of the Seljuk state was Nishapur, the preeminent urban hub within the Khurasan region. During this time, Nishapur encompassed an area of roughly 1,680 hectares, with its population estimated to have varied between 110,000 and 220,000 residents. During the reign of Tuğrul Beg, the capital was relocated to the city of Rayy as a logical consequence of the state's policy of westward expansion. During the reign of Sultan Malik-Shah, the capital was transferred from Rayy to the city of Isfahan, which thereafter emerged as the largest urban center within the Seljuk Empire. Subsequent to Sultan Sanjar's involvement in the Seljuk succession, the capital of the Great Seljuk Empire was relocated to Merv in Khurasan, whereas Isfahan continued to serve as the capital of the Iraq Seljuk Sultanate. During the reign of Sultan Sanjar, Merv ascended to prominence as the foremost cultural hub of the Seljuk era. At the peak of its development, the city's population is estimated to have reached around 150,000. In addition to the aforementioned cities, Herat, Balkh, Qazvin, Hamadan, Yazd, Qom, Shiraz, Maragha, Tabriz, Baghdad, Ahvaz, and Mosul were significant urban hubs in which urban life underwent considerable development under Seljuk governance. Other noteworthy urban centers such as Bukhara, Samarkand, Ghazni, Damascus, Aleppo, Antioch, and Edessa, situated within the domains of states subject to Seljuk suzerainty, can also be incorporated among this group.

The physical layout of Seljuk cities typically comprised of three primary elements: the inner citadel (kuhendiz), the central urban zone (shahristan), and the peripheral districts (rabad). During the Seljuk era, marketplaces and commercial hubs were progressively located in the rabad, instead of the conventional city center (shahristan), which had started to decline in prominence. In prominent urban centres,

[60] Şehmerdân b. Ebi'l-Hayr, *Nuzhet-nâme-yi 'Alâ'î*, edited by Ferheng Cihânpûr, Tahran 1362/1983, p.212-238; Ebû Bekr Mutahhar b. Muhammed Cemâlî-yi Yezdî, *Ferruh-nâme*, edited by İrec Afşâr, Tahran 1346/1967, 119-171; Muhammed b. Mahmûd-i Hemedânî, *'Acâ'ib-nâme*, edited by Ca'fer Muderris Sâdikî, Tahran 1375/1996, p.327-344.



extensive bazaars consisting of enclosed areas were established, with each thoroughfare designated for a particular guild of artisans or traders. Prominent charitable institutions—including endowments (waqfs), hospitals, and zawiyas (Sufi lodges)—were prevalent and exerted a substantial influence on social dynamics. The water supply and irrigation requirements of the cities were overseen by an official referred to as the mir-āb, who employed advanced canal systems to facilitate distribution.

Urban populations comprised individuals from diverse social and economic strata. In prominent urban centres predating the Seljuk era, elite families (aʿyān), typically possessed either Iranian or Arab ancestry, and had undergone a process of Persianization over an extended period. These families possessed considerable power and influence in their respective areas, whether through administrative roles or amassed economic prosperity. Owing to their robust position, they frequently held the authority to influence the city's destiny during critical periods. The Ghaznavid historian Abū'l-Faẓl al-Bayhaqī narrates how the dignitaries (aʿyān) of Nishapur motivated the city's residents to embrace Seljuk governance in lieu of Ghaznavid authority.[61] These families, frequently practicing intermarriage and possessing property not only in urban centres but also in neighbouring towns and villages, successfully preserved their influential status throughout the Seljuk era. Furthermore, novel families were incorporated into the urban aristocracy during this period, exemplified by the Khujandī family, which presided over the Shāfiʿīs in Isfahan, the Saʿīdī family, which led the Ḥanafīs, and the Āl-i Burhān family, which wielded significant influence in Bukhara. However, a limited proportion of these families could be attributed to Turkic ancestry. Research conducted by I. P. Petrushevsky indicates that by the mid-12th century, within a total of 41 aristocratic families located in the city of Sabzavār in Khurasan, 24 were of Arab origin, 12 were of Persian origin, and only one was of Turkic descent.[62] A similar conclusion is clearly evident in R. N. Bulliet's study on the city of Nishapur.[63] Some of these families, paralleling the weakening of Seljuk central authority, became decisive powers not only in religious and scholarly activities but also in political affairs. The Seljuk poet Refi'u'd-dīn al-Lunbānī's address to a patron belonging to such a family in the second half of the twelfth century as "es-sadr maliku'l-mulūk-i qudāt wa ḥu-

61 *Târîh-i Beyhakî*, p.728.

62 I. P. Petruşevsky, "Gorodskaya znati v gosudarstve Khulaguidov", *Sovetskoye Vostokovedeniye*, 5, (1948), p.88.

63 Richard N. Bulliet, *The Patricians of Nishapur. A Study in Medieval Islamic Social History*, Cambridge 1972, p.7-18.

kamā" and his praise of him as "muhr-i sulṭān-i sharīʿat, rukn-i dīn wa millat" sufficiently demonstrate the patron's influential status.[64]

A considerable percentage of the urban populace was involved in military, bureaucratic, academic, and legal professions, along with commerce, craftsmanship, and a range of artisanal occupations. Bureaucratic, academic, and legal roles frequently demonstrated a hereditary nature and were predominantly occupied by aristocratic families (khwās, ʿayyān) who commonly maintained their positions even through dynastic transitions. This phenomenon was likewise applicable to the ra'īs—local leaders who acquired authority over urban administration during times of diminished political authority and who successfully legitimized their power through political strategies. A research conducted by A. K. S. Lambton demonstrates that the term ra'īs encompassed not only locally designated, comparatively minor officials but also officials appointed by the sultan who were conferred with extensive powers within the "civil" hierarchy.[65] A variety of sources highlight the influential position of the *ra'īs* as intermediaries between the state and society.[66]

Military organizations, sometimes alluded to in official documents as the "men of the sword" (rijāl al-sayf, ahl al-shamshīr), represented a notable segment of the aristocratic class living within the city. Likewise, poets (shu'arā') and literary figures (udabā'), who frequently maintained close ties with the palace and state officials, constituted a significant segment of the urban elite.

In significant urban centres, a prosperous and influential merchant class occasionally emerged, engaging in extensive trade with international regions. Certain members of the governing elite, including individuals from the dynasty, entrusted their capital to these merchants for investment objectives. Notwithstanding their opulent lifestyles and substantial influence derived from their partnerships, this group occupied a negligible position in official ceremonies.[67] Traders involved in medium and small-scale commerce, affluent or middle-class artisans who in-

64 *Dîvân*, edited by Takî Bîneş, Tahran 1369/1990, p.119, 124.

65 A. K. S.Lambton, "Atabetu'l-Ketebeye Göre Sancar İmparatorluğunun Yönetimi", trans. Nejat Kaymaz, *Belleten*, XXXVII/147 (1973), p.387.

66 Emîr Mu'izzî, *Dîvân*, edited by Nâsir Hayyerî, Tahran 1362/1983, p.211-213, 648; Muntecebu'd-dîn Bedî' el-Cuveynî, *'Atabetu'l-ketebe*, s.21-30, 40-41, 55-56. Krş. G. M. Kurpalidis, *Büyük Selçuklu Devletinin İdarî, Sosyal ve Ekonomik Tarihi*, trans. İlyas Kamalov, Istanbul 2011, p.111-117.

67 M. F. Köprülü, "Hârizmşâhlar", *İA*, V/1, p.283.



vested capital in diverse crafts, small retailers, and a multitude of skilled laborers were structured into separate guilds within urban settings.

Crafts held a significant role within the urban economic sphere. Tile production, ironworking, dye manufacturing, paper fabrication, and arms production were notably advanced. Weaving looms, iron furnaces, leather processing workshops, paper mills, along with kilns and factories manufacturing materials such as tiles and glass were prevalent across the Great Seljuk dominion. Cotton and silk weaving constituted some of the primary industries in urban centres. Specifically, the cotton and woollen textiles produced in the urban centres of Khorasan and Transoxiana achieved considerable prominence during this era. These textiles produced considerable demand and were exported to regions as distant as Baghdad.[68]

In urban areas, in addition to proficient artisans, substantial populations consisting of individuals classified as poor, unemployed, and vagrant also existed. Despite the establishment of informal organizations by these groups and their continuous oversight by the municipal police, they readily instigated considerable disruptions whenever the occasion presented itself. However, during periods of internal strife and unexpected assaults, these groups were sometimes utilized as mercenary troops. In the twelfth century, such groups were termed rind in Herat, whereas in Baghdad, Tus, and several other cities in Khorasan, they were identified as ‘ayyār. It is also recognized that diverse terms such as awbāsh, sattār, and fityān were used to describe analogous groups in the medieval Islamic context.

Seljuk urban areas served as dynamic hubs for religious and sectarian engagement. The population typically inhabited distinct neighbourhoods according to their religious affiliations and, occasionally, even their sectarian ties. Religious and academic matters were commonly structured around prominent families associated with particular sects. In addition to Sunni Islamic denominations, the Ismailis, who intensified their activities in Iran during the late 11th century, leveraged internal dynastic conflicts within the Seljuk ruling family to solidify their role in key urban centres. Zahiru’d-Din al-Nishapuri[69] and Muhammad al-Ravendi[70] report that as a result of Ismaili proselytization efforts, the number of adherents in Isfahan alone reached around 30,000. As well as Muslims, Zoroastrians, Christians, and Jews also formed important religious communities within Seljuk urban centres.

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68 Osman Turan, *Selçuklular Tarihi ve Türk-İslâm Medeniyeti*, Istanbul 1996, p.344-345.

69 *Selçûk-nâme*, p.46.

70 *Râhatu’s-sudûr ve âyetu’s-surûr*, I, p.155.

In major cities, during religious festivals, victory celebrations, and the accession of rulers, all bazaars and marketplaces were lavishly opulently decorated, and ceremonial arches were erected throughout the streets.[71] In addition to religious festivals, notable dates from ancient Iranian culture, such as Nowruz and Mehregan, continued to be actively observed among the populace and were celebrated with grand ceremonies.[72]

Economic activity attained an unprecedented degree of prosperity across a broad geographical area, facilitated by the establishment of political stability, the development of new irrigation systems, enhanced agricultural output, and the growth of trade. Caravan routes were conducted safely across Mâwarâ al-Nahr, Khwarezm, Iran, Azerbaijan, Iraq, Syria, and Anatolia. As a result, products manufactured in urban areas could be readily distributed to a multitude of locations through these vibrant trade routes. The security of the caravans was typically maintained through the provision of military escorts.

During the rule of Sultan Melikshah, the total revenue derived from trade taxes and customs duties amounted to 600,000 dinars. According to the narrative provided by Hamdullah Mustawfi al-Kazwini, a writer from the Ilkhanid era, in his treatise Risâle-yi Melikshâhî, the taxes remitted by the provinces to the central government totalled 215 million dinars.[73] The fact that this amount was more than ten times greater than the tax revenues of the Ilkhanate State— which, in the early 14th century, ruled roughly the same territory and could only increase its revenues to about 21 million dinars after reforms implemented by Ghazan Khan (1295–1304)—is critical in[74] illustrating the economic peak achieved by the Seljuks in the last quarter of the 11th century. It should also be noted that in the Ilkhanid era, the dinar denoted silver coins, whereas in the Seljukid era, the dinar was a gold.

As well as the taxes collected from provinces and vassal states, during the reign of Sultan Melikshah, the Byzantine Empire also paid tribute to the Seljuks.[75] A portion of the taxes collected for the state budget and the royal treasury was allocated to the development of the realm and the establishment of large charitable

71 İbnu'l-Esîr, *el-Kâmil*, X, p.174.

72 Muhtârî-yi Gaznevî, *Dîvân*, edited by Ruknu'd-dîn-Humâyûn-ferruh, Tahran 1336/1957, p.115-121, 284, 290, 309; Mu'izzî, *Dîvân*, p.623, 630.

73 *Nuzhetu'l-kulûb*, p.27.

74 O. G. Özgüdenli, *Moğol İranında Gelenek ve Değişim: Gâzân Han ve Reformları*, p.273.

75 İbnu'l-Esîr, *el-Kâmil*, X, p.154.



foundations and public works. Yâkût al-Hamawî describes a very large complex built by Sultan Sanjar in Merv, which included not only the sultan's tomb but also many charitable institutions (imarets).[76]

In the Seljuk era, economic prosperity led to enhanced social welfare, which subsequently promoted the advancement of health, education, and cultural pursuits. The first Seljuk dār al-shifā (hospital) was founded in Nishapur during the era of Nizām al-Mulk. This was subsequently accompanied by the establishment of additional dār al-shifās. Seljuk sultans, aristocratic women, and significant state officials commissioned a substantial number of hospitals. In addition to autonomous hospitals, mobile medical units were established within the Seljuk military during this time.[77]

During the Seljuk period, educational endeavours were predominantly carried out in madrasas, which quickly gained prominence and became extensively disseminated. The vizier Nizam al-Mulk founded a considerable number of madrasas referred to as "Nizamiyya Madrasas" across various cities. The most renowned of these institutions is undoubtedly the Baghdad Nizāmiyya Madrasa. In addition to Baghdad, affiliated institutions of the Nizāmiyya madrasas were established in cities including Nishapur, Merv, Balkh, Isfahan, Rayy, Amol, Herat, Mosul, Basra, Zabid (Yemen), and Fusang.[78]

In Baghdad, apart from the Nizâmiyye Madrasa, there were madrasas associated with the Shafi'i school such as al-Shāshī, Tāciyya, Abū'n-Najīb al-Suhrawardī, Kemāliyya, Sikātiyya (Ibn al-'Ibārī), 'A'azziyya, and Bahāiyya. Those affiliated with the Hanafi school included Abū Hanīfa (Abū Sa'd al-Mustawfī or Hanefi), Terken Hatun, Tutushiyya, Sa'āde, Giyāsiyya (Sultān or Mugīsiyya), and Hatūnu'l-Mustazhiriyya (al-Muwafaqiyya) madrasas; and the Hanbali school was represented by Abū Sa'd al-Muḥarrimī (Shaykh 'Abdu'l-Qādir al-Jīlānī), Abū Shujā', Ibn al-Ibrādī, and Ibn Dīnār madrasas.[79]

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76 *Mu'cemu'l-buldân*, IV/1, p.509.

77 O. Turan, *Selçuklular Tarihi*, p.346; Arslan Terzioğlu, "Bîmâristân", *DİA*, VI, p.167.

78 On Nizāmiyya madrasas, see Ahmet Ocak, *Selçuklu Devri Üniversiteleri: Nizâmiye Medreseleri*, Istanbul 2017; Nûrullah Kesâ'î, *Medâris-i Nizâmiyye ve te'sîrât-i 'ilmî ve ictimâî-yi ân*, Tahran 1363/1984.

79 Huseyin Emîn, *Târîhu'l-'Irâk fi'l-'asri's-Selcûkî*, Bağdad 1965, p.380-383; Daphna Ephrat, *A Learned Society in a Period of Transition: The Sunni 'Ulama' of Eleventh-Century Baghdad*, Albany 2000, p.28-29; Vanessa van Renterghem, *Les élites Bagdadiennes au temps des Seldjoukides*, II, Beyrouth 2015, p.103-106; Suat Kaymak, *Selçuklular Döneminde*

Among the primary madrasas offering education in Nishapur during the Seljuk era were the madrasa of Tughrul Bey (Sultāniyya), the institution where Abū ʻOsmān al-Sābūnī instructed, a madrasa named after Ḥātūn-i Mahd-i ʻIrāq during the reign of Sultan Malikshah, the Meyān-i Bāzār-i Nishapur constructed by the imams of Nishapur, the madrasa founded by Emir Isfahsālār Sayf al-Dīn Abū Nasr Muhammad Abi'l-Khayr al-Husrawjirdī, as well as the Nāṣiriyya/Nāṣihiyya Madrasa, al-Muṣṭabiyya Madrasa, al-Kaysariyya Madrasa, Serheng Madrasa, al-Sandāliyya Madrasa, Kutbī Madrasa, Ḥabīrī Madrasa, Ṣūfiyya Madrasa, Abū'l-Ḥasan al-Kattān Madrasa, al-ʻAmīdiyya Madrasa, al-Busṭī Madrasa, al-Ḥaddād Madrasa, al-Faryābādī Madrasa, and the madrasa associated with Abū Sahl al-Sulūkī.[80]

In the city of Merv, the final capital of the Great Seljuk Empire, there existed a multitude of madrasas and libraries. Some of the primary madrasas in Merv included the Amīdiyya Madrasa, Nizāmiyya Madrasa, ʻAzīziyya Madrasa, Kemāliyya Madrasa, Sharaf al-Mulk al-Mustawfī Madrasa, Ḥātūniyya Madrasa, and Shahābī Madrasa. Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī observes that Merv accommodated ten distinguished libraries that were unmatched globally, with the majority being founded during the Seljuk era. Among these, he lists the libraries of the ʻAzīziyya, Kemāliyya, Sharaf al-Mulk al-Mustawfī Madrasa, Nizāmiyya Madrasa, Amīdiyya Madrasa, Majd al-Mulk, Ḥātūniyya Madrasa, and Zamīriyya. The author further mentions two additional libraries associated with Abū Bakr al-Samʻānī and Shihāb al-Dīn al-Samʻānī, along with an unnamed mosque library. The author asserts that, in the absence of any collateral, it was permissible to borrow as many as 200 volumes of books with a total value exceeding 200 dinars.[81]In this era, in addition to the public libraries used by the populace in major cities, it is understood that the Seljuk sultans had their own private libraries within their palaces.[82]

In Isfahan, another capital of the Seljuk State, the Medrese-i Celâlî (also known as Medrese-yi Melikshâhî or Nizâmiyye-yi Isfahan), was built by Melikshâh, as well as a madrasa erected by Muhammad Tapar.[83] During the Seljuk period, the

Bağdâd'da Mezhep Mücadeleleri (1055-1152), (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis), Mimar Sinan Güzel Sanatlar Üniversitesi SBE, Istanbul 2022, p.174-199.

80 Cihan Piyadeoğlu, *Güneş Ülkesi Horasan: Büyük Selçuklular Dönemi*, Istanbul 2012, p.250-253.

81 *Muʻcemu'l-buldân*, IV/1, p.509-510.

82 Özgüdenli, "Selçuklular, I. Büyük Selçuklular, B. Sosyoekonomik ve Kültürel Hayat", *DİA*, XXXVI, p.374.

83 Osman G. Özgüdenli, "İsfahan", *DİA*, XXII, p.499.



increase in the number of madrasas and the widespread expansion of educational activities, led to the training of many scholars.[84]

In Seljukid times, Persian was primarily favored as the language of administration and literature. Since the time of Amîdu'l-Mulk al-Kundurî and Nizâmu'l-Mulk, Persian was employed in both official correspondence and bureaucracy. In addition to official documents, many literary works were written in this language. The 12th-century maqāmāt writer Hamîdu'd-dîn al-Balkhî[85] notes that he wrote his work in Persian in line with the literary taste of his audience. The concerted efforts of the Seljuk sultans was a critical factor in the rapid dissemination of the Persian language in literature. Indeed, the work *Risâle-yi Senceriyye*, written by 'Ömer b. Sehlân es-Sâvî (d. 540/1145) was composed in Perisan at the request of Sultan Sanjar, so that the state officials and commanders of the special troops could understand it.[86] Despite the fact that Arabic had lost some of its influence and prominence compared to earlier periods, it still maintained its position as the language of science, law, and education.

The Great Seljuk court exerted considerable influence on the advancement of scientific, literary, and cultural endeavours in the Iranian region. Under the auspices and support of the Seljuk sultans, influential figures in Iranian literature created significant works throughout this era. A significant portion of contemporary Iranian literary masterpieces were created either directly or indirectly through the patronage and sponsorship of the Seljuk sultans. The Siyâset-nâme, composed by

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84 Among the main scholars of the Seljukid period: İmâmu'l-Haremeyn el-Cuveynî, Hatîb el-Bağdâdî, Ebû İshâk eş-Şîrâzî, Ebû Bekir Muhammed b. Ahmed eş-Şâşî, İmâm Gazzâlî, el-Kiyâ el-Herrâsî, Muhammed b. Yahyâ en-Nîşâbûrî, İbrâhîm el-Mervezî, Ebu'l-Fazl el-Kirmânî, Ebû Nasr Ahmed el-İsbicâbî, Ebu'l-Fazl el-Kirmânî, Ebû Mansûr el-'Abbâdî el-Mervezî, Bahâeddîn el-Harâkî, Ebû Nasr Ahmed b. Mansûr el-İsbîcâbî, Ebu'l-Usr el-Pezdevî, Ebû Bekr Hâherzâde, Şemsu'l-Eimme es-Serahsî, Fahru'd-dîn er-Râzî; 'Alî b. Hasan el-Bâharzî, Tuğrâ'î, Hatîb et-Tebrîzî, Mevhûb b. Ahmed el-Cevâlîkî, 'Abdu'l-Kâhir el-Curcânî, Ebû Ca'fer Ahmed b. 'Alî el-Beyhakî, Zemahşerî, 'Ömer Hayyâm, Muhammed b. Ahmed el-Beyhakî, 'Abdu'r-Rahman el-Hâzinî, Sâbûr b. Sehl, İbnu't-Tilmîz; Baba Tâhir-i Uryân, 'Abdu'l-Kerîm el-Kuşeyrî, Ebû 'Alî el-Fârmedî ve 'Abdu'l-Kâdir-i Geylânî'yi saymak mümkündür (Özgüdenli, *Ortaçağ'da Türkler, Moğollar, İranlılar (Kaynaklar ve Araştırmalar)*, p.420; Ahmet Ocak, "Selçuklular-C. Dinî, İlmî, Fikrî ve Tasavvufî Hayat. Dinî ve İlmî Hayat", *DİA*, XXXVI, p.375-377).

85 Hamîdu'd-dîn Ebû Bekr-i Belhî, *Makâmât-i Hamîdî*, edited by Rizâ Enzâbî-nejâd, Tahran 1372/1993, p.21-22.

86 Refer to Mehmet Altay Köymen, "Selçuklu Devri Kaynaklarına Dâir Araştırmalar II, Risâle-i Senceriyye", *Doğu Dilleri*, I/3 (1969), p.15-55.

the Seljuk vizier Nizâmu'l-Mulk for Sultan Melikshah, is regarded as one of the most exemplary instances of its genre within the Islamic sphere.

Muhammad ibn Mansur al-Yamani, recognized by the epithet "Zerrīn-dast," composed the Persian text Nūru'l-'Uyūn on ophthalmic diseases in 480 AH (1087–88 CE) at the behest of Sultan Melikshah.[87] Similarly, the *İhtiyārāt-i Shāhnāmeh* (or *Intihāb-i Shāhnāmeh*), a poetic summary of the *Shāhnāmeh* prepared in 474 AH (1081–82 CE) in thirteen chapters by ʿAlī ibn Aḥmad for Sultan Melikshāh, highlights the interest in the *Shāhnāmeh*[88], within the Seljuk court during this period.[89] Irānshāh (or Irānshān) ibn Abī'l-Hayr composed his poetic works *Kūsh-nāmeh*[90] and *Bahman-nāmeh*[91]*on* behalf of Sultan Muḥammad Tapar.[92] Likewise, al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) is said, according to one tradition, to have composed his work *Nasīḥatu'l-mulūk* for Sultan Muḥammad Tapar, while according to another tradition, it was written on behalf of the Khurāsān ruler Sencer. Additionally, during Sultan Sencer's reign, *Risāle-yi Senceriyye fī kā'ināti'l-'unsuriyye*,[93] authored by 'Umar ibn Sahlān al-Sāwī, and *Tuhfatu'l-mulk fī'l-bāh*,[94] written by Abū'l-Muẓaffar Ḥaybatullāh ibn Ardashīr ibn Kaykubād, were among the works composed at the request of the Seljuk sultansIn addition to these works, numerous compositions dedicated to the Seljuk sultans have unfortunately not survived to the present day. These include the *Melik-nāme*, a Persian poetic work of unknown authorship discussing the origins of the Seljuks; the *Risāle-yi Melikshāhī*, written in honor of Sultan Melikshāh by an unknown author; the *Tārīkh-i Āl-i Seljūq* by the poet Abū Tāhir al-

87 Muhammed b. Mansûr b. el-Yamânî, *Nûru'l-'uyûn*, Bodleian Library, (Oxford), Sale, nr. 72, vr. 1a.

88 The only manuscript of the work is in the Gotha Library of the University of Erfurt: 'Alî b. Ahmed, *İhtiyârât-i Şâh-nâme*, Erfurt Üniversitesi Gotha Kütüphanesi, Ms.Orient, p 48.

89 Bk. Osman G. Özgüdenli, "Şâh-nâme ve Türkler I: Selçuklu ve Osmanlı Sarayında Şâh-nâme", *Tarihin Engin Sularında: Prof. Dr. Vahdettin Engin'e Armağan*, ed. A. Kolay-A. Vurgun, Istanbul 2022, p.64-65.

90 *Kûş-nâme*, edited by Celâl Metînî, Tahran 1356/1976, p.43-44.

91 *Behmen-nâme*, edited by Rahîm 'Afîfî, Tahran 1370/1991.

92 For detail on these two works, see Mahmûd Omîdsâlâr, "Yâddâşthâ-yi Kûş-nâme", *Ferheng-i İrân-zemîn*, 30 (1384/2005), s.313-336; 'Allâme Muhammed-i Kazvînî, *Mesâ'il-i Pârisiyye: Yâddâşthâ-yi 'Allâme Muhammed-i Kazvînî*, edited by İrec Afşâr-'Alî Muhammed Huner, Tahran 1385/2007, p.181-183.

93 Bk. M. A. Köymen, "Selçuklu Devri Kaynaklarına Dâir Araştırmalar II, p.15-55.

94 Ebu'l-Muzaffer Hibetullâh b. Erdeşîr b. Keykubâd, *Tuhfetu'l-mulk fi'l-bâh*, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Ms.Orient. Oct. 1036, vr. 2b.



Ḥātūnī; *Mafāhiru'l-Aṭrāq*, authored by ʻAlī al-Qazvīnī for Sultan Sencer; the poetic *Siyar-i Futūḥ-i Sulṭān Sencer* by the poet Muʻizzī, also dedicated to Sultan Sencer; and the *Sencer-nāme*, another work honoring Sultan Sencer of unknown authorship.

Historical and literary records reveal that members of the Seljuk dynasty, such as Sultan Melikshāh, Sencer, Süleymānshāh, III. Tuğrul, and Melik Toganshāh, had a taste for Iranian poetry.[95] Many Persian poems attributed to Seljuk sultans such as Melikshāh, Sencer, Süleymānshāh, and III. Tuğrul have survived to the present day.[96] According to one account, the last Seljuk ruler, III. Tuğrul, was killed on the battlefield while reciting the Shāhnāmeh following his defeat against the Khwarezmshahs. During Sultan Alp-Arslan's reign, the poet Burhānī held the title "Meliku'ş-şuʻarā" (King of Poets), and under Sultan Melikshāh and Sencer, this title was borne by the poet Emir Muʻizzī. Many prominent poets of Iranian literature were present at the courts of the Seljuk sultans during this period.[97] It is known that after the death of Mâh-melek Hatun, the daughter of Sultan Sencer who was married to the Seljuk ruler of Iraq, Mahmûd, Sultan Sencer invited the poet ʻAmʻak-i Buhârî from Transoxiana to his court to compose an elegy. At that time, the poet, who was quite advanced in age, informed the Sultan of his old age and sent the elegy he had composed through his son Hâmidî to the Seljuk capital, Merv.[98] In addition to the Seljuk sultans, the Seljuk rulers (meliks) also patronized poets and literary figures. Nizâmî-yi ʻArûzî records that the Seljuk prince Melik Toganşâh b. Alp-Arslan, known for his close interest in poetry, granted 500 gold dinars to the poet Ezrakî for one of his poems.[99] It is known that the leading poets of the era—Emîr Muʻizzî, ʻÖmer Hayyâm, Edib Sâbir, ʻAmʻak-i Buhârî, Enverî, Senâ'î, ʻAbdu'l-Vâsiʻ-yi Cebelî, Seyyid Hasan-i Gaznevî, and Ezrakî—had connections with the Seljuk court. Besides these poets, other prominent poets and literati who flourished during the Seljuk period include Lâmiʻî-yi Gurgânî, Nâsir-i Husrev, Mesʻûd-i Saʻd-i Selmân, Nizâmî-yi Gencevî, Hakanî, Ebû Tâhir el-Hâtûnî,

[95] Muhammed-i ʻAvfî, *Lubâbu'l-elbâb*, edited by Edward G. Browne-Mîrzâ Muhammed-i Kazvînî, I, Leiden 1906, s.34; Devletşâh-i Semerkandî, *Tezkiretu'ş-şuʻârâ'*, edited by Muhammed Ramazânî, Tahran 1366/1987, p.58-59.

[96] For the publication and translation of the poems of the Great Seljuk sultans, cf. Osman G. Özgüdenli, "Büyük Selçuklu Sultanlarına Ait Farsça Şiirler", *Marmara Türkiyat Araştırmaları Dergisi*, I/2 (2015), p.39-67.

[97] Osman G. Özgüdenli, "Selçuklu Çağında Dil ve Edebiyat", *Selçuklu Tarihi El Kitabı*, ed. Refik Turan, Ankara 2012, p.634-638.

[98] ʻAmʻak-i Buhârî, *Dîvân*, p.14-15.

[99] *Çehâr makâle*, p.44.

Abîverdî, Esîru'd-dîn-i Ahsîketî, Zahîr-i Fâryâbî, Cemâlu'd-dîn 'Abdu'r-Rezzâk-i İsfahânî, Rafi'u'd-dîn-i Lunbânî, and Şerefu'd-dîn Şefrevih.

In addition to the Seljuk sultans, viziers and statesmen also patronized poets and literary figures, thereby contributing to the development of literary and cultural activities. As early as the founding period of the Seljuk State, Ibn Hassûl (d. 1058), the author of the treatise *Kitâbu Tafzîli'l-etrâk 'alâ sâ'iri'l-ecnâd*, presented his work to the vizier 'Amîdu'l-Mulk al-Kundurî to be read before Tuğrul Bey.[100] Similarly, Fahru'd-dîn-i Gurgânî, who composed the poetic work *Vîs u Râmîn* in 446/1054-55 on behalf of the Seljuk vizier 'Amîdu'l-Mulk al-Kundurî, included a eulogy dedicated to Tuğrul Bey in the introduction of his work.[101] It is well known that the Seljuk vizier Nizâmu'l-Mulk patronized the scholars, poets, and literary figures of his time. In his works *Dumyetu'l-kasr* and *'Usretu Ehli'l-'Asr*, 'Alî b. Hasan al-Bâharzî included numerous eulogies composed by prominent poets of the period in honour of Nizâmu'l-Mulk. All these developments contributed to the emergence of a new literary style in Persian literature during the Seljuk era, known as the "Sebk-i Selçukî."

[100] İbn Hassul, "Tafdilu'l-Etrâk", edited by 'Abbâs 'Azzavî, *Belleten*, IV/14-15 (1940), p.1-30; trans. Şerafettin Yaltkaya, "İbn Hassûl'un Türkler Hakkında Bir Eseri", *Belleten*, IV/14-15 (1940), p.235-266.

[101] *Vîs u Râmîn*, p.22-26.



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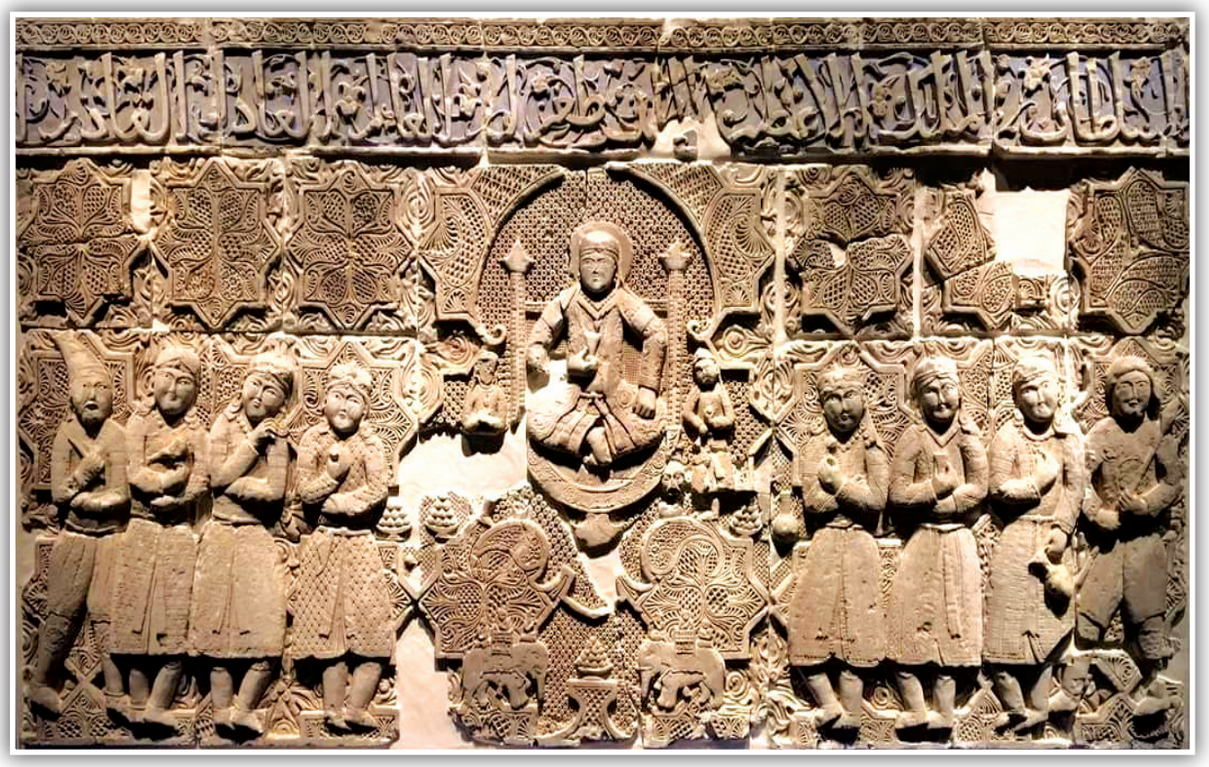
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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: A relief probably depicting Sultan Tugrul Beg

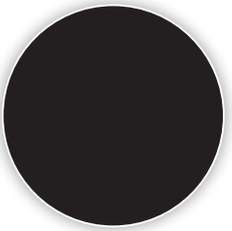


Source: Philadelphia Museum of Art

The Khwarezmian State



Source: Atilla Karataş Collection



THE KHWAREZMIAN STATE

(1097-1231)

Gülseren FERMANOĞLU*

Introduction

The Khwaraezmshahs was a Turkic dynasty with its capital in Khwarezm, governing territories that encompassed Khorasan, Transoxiana, Mazandaran, Dihistan, Persian Iraq (Irak-i Acem), and Azerbaijan.[1] Khwarezm is the name used for the lands stretching on both sides south of the Aral Sea.[2] Historically, the rulers of Khwarezm were conferred the title of Khwarezmshah.[3] The Afrighids constituted the initial dynasty to govern the region until the era of the Khwarezmshah, pre-

1 For more information on the political history of the Kharezmshahs, see also. M. Fuad Köprülü, "Hârizmşahlar", *İA*, V/I, p.265-296; Abbas Perviz, *Tarih-i Selâcika ve Hârizmşahan*, Tahran 1351 hş; Clifford Edmund Bosworth, "Kharazm-shahs", *EI²*, IV, p.1065-1068; Aydın Taneri, *Celâlüd'dîn Hârizmşah ve Zamanı*, Ankara, 1977; Ghulam Rabbani Aziz, *A Short History of The Khwārazmshāhs*, Karachi 1978;Vasilij Vladimiroviç Barthold, *Moğol İstilasına Kadar Türkistan*, prep. Hakkı Dursun Yıldız, Ankara 1990; Aydın Taneri, *Hârezmşahlar*, Ankara 1993; a.mlf, "Hârizmşahlar", *DİA*, XVI, p.298-231; İbrahim Kafesoğlu, *Hârezmşahlar Devleti Tarihi*, Ankara 2000; Abdülkerim Özaydın, "Hârezmşahlar Devleti" *Türkler*, IV, Ankara 2002; Ziya Bünyatov, *Hârezmşahlığı ve Enuşteginliler Devleti*, trans. Tural Rızayev, Istanbul 2003; Gülseren Azar Nasırabadı, *Hârezmşâhlar Döneminde Diplomasi ve Elçilik Faaliyetleri*, Ankara 2021.

2 Zeki Velidi Togan, "Hârizm", *İA*, V/I, 240; Clifford Edmund Bosworth, "Khwarezm", *EI²*, IV, 1060; Abdülkerim Özaydın, "Hârizm", *DİA*, XVI, p.217.

3 Vladimir Barthold, "Hârizmşah", *İA*, V/I, p.263.

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siding over Khwarezm from 305 to 995. Subsequently, while the Samanids established dominion over the Afrighids in this area, the Ma'munids seized Khwarezm in 995 and governed it until 1017.[4] Following the Ghaznavid conquest of the region, Khwarezm was administered by Ghaznavid governors, during which period Altuntaş b. Hâcib, appointed by the sultan, and subsequently his descendants, known as the Altıntaşoğulları, maintained control over Khwarezm. In 1041, owing to a conflict between the Ghaznavids and the Altıntaşoğulları, Sultan Mas'ud of Ghazni designated Shah Malik, the ruler of Jand, to administer the region. Following the Great Seljuk Empire's acquisition of Khwarezm, these territories were integrated into the state. Throughout the Seljuk era, the area remained under the administration of appointed governors, a condition that established the foundation for the subsequent emergence of the Khwarezmshah State.[5] These set of circumstances opened the door for the emergence of the Khwarezmshah State.

Political History

Anuştegin Garcaî, the descendant of the dynasty that established the Khwarezmshah State, was a Turkish slave acquired from Georgia by Bilge Tegin, a prominent official of the Seljuk Empire.[6] There is a divergence of opinion in the sources regarding his lineage. One view suggests that Anuştegin's ancestry may trace back to the Begdili tribe of the Oghuz Turks. Another view that has been put forward is that he may have belonged to one of the Yimek, Kangly, Chigil, Karluk, Khalaj, or Kipchak groups.[7] Anuştegin entered the ranks of the Seljuk state and initiated his ascent through the display of his capabilities. Eventually, he adopted the position of taştdar[8] and subsequently ascended to the status of Khwarezm Shah.[9] Although Sultan Melikshah be-

4 Bosworth, "Khwarezm-shahs", p.1065-1066; Aydın Usta, *Türklerin İslâmlaşma Serüveni Sâmânîler*, Istanbul 2013, p.260-261; Ahmet Taşağıl, "Me'mûnîler", *DİA*, XXIX, p.105.

5 Bosworth, "Khwarezm-shahs", 1066-1067; Taneri, "Hârizmşahlar", p.228; For detailed information see Mehmet Altay Köymen, *Büyük Selçuklu İmparatorluğu Tarihi, Kuruluş Devri*, Ankara 1993, p.145-160.

6 Alâeddîn Ata Melik Cüveynî, *Tarih-i Cihângüşâ,* Turkish trans. Mürsel Öztürk, Ankara 1998, p.249; İbnü'l-Esîr, *el-Kâmil fi't-tarih*, VIII, trans. Abdülkerim Özaydın, Istanbul 2008, 406; Mîrhând, *Ravzatü's-safâ'*, IV, 1339 prep. 356.

7 Regarding the views put forward about the origin of the Kharezmshahs for detailed information see Köprülü "Hârizmşahlar", 266; Togan, "Hârizm", p.250; Kafesoğlu*, Hârezmşahlar*, p.42-43.

8 Erdoğan Merçil, "Taştdâr", *DİA*, XL, p.161-162.

9 Cüveynî, *Cihângüşâ*, p.249; İbnü'l-Esîr, *el-Kâmil*, VIII, p.406; Şebankareyî, *Mecmuaü'l-ensâb*, Tahran 1376 hş, p.134; Mîrhând*, Ravzatu's-safa*, IV, p.656; Aziz, *Khwārazmshāhs*, p.1.



stowed Anuştegin the revenue of the Khwarezm region, he stayed at the Sultan's side and did not govern the region in practice. While Anuştegin held the title of governor of Khwarezm, the region was in fact administered by Ekinci b. Koçkar, who originated from the Kipchak Turks. Nevertheless, Ekinci met his demise at the hands of the Seljuk emirs Kodan and Yaruki. Subsequently, Emir-i Dad Habeşî b. Altuntak, designated as the governor of Khorasan by Sultan Berkyaruk, appointed Kutbeddîn Muhammed, the son of Anuştegin, as the governor of Khwarezm in 1097. In this manner, the de facto governance of the Khwarezmshah dynasty in the area commenced. Kutbeddîn Muhammed, characterized by his high level of education and proficiency in administration and military leadership, executed his responsibilities as the governor of Khwarezm with competence.[10]

Kutbeddîn Muhammed persisted in his duties throughout the reign of the Seljuk Sultan Sanjar. Following the rebellion and subsequent death of Habeşî b. Altuntak, Sultan Sanjar, who assumed control of Khorasan, determined that Kutbeddîn Muhammed should continue to serve as governor in Khwarezm. Subsequent to this, during Kutbeddîn Muhammed's absence from Khwarezm, a Turkish malik, accompanied by his troops, approached the area. Despite Kutbeddîn Muhammed's appeal to Sultan Sanjar for assistance, he autonomously intervened prior to the arrival of the sultan's aid, engaging the Turks and achieving their defeat.[11] Consequently, having administered Khwarezm under the Seljuk Empire for thirty years, Kutbeddîn Muhammed dedicated one year to personal attendance at the court of Sultan Sanjar and dispatched his son Atsız to serve in his stead for an additional year.[12]

Atsız (1128-1156)

Following the demise of his father, Kutbeddîn Muhammed, Atsız was designated as the governor of Khwarezm. Initially devoted to the Seljuk Sultan Sanjar, Atsız ultimately revolted and commenced the transition towards independence for the Khwarezmshah State. After assuming power, Atsız, who had previously served Sultan Sanjar, earned the sultan's confidence through a series of significant events. One significant event transpired in 1130 when an attempt was made to assassinate Sultan Sanjar. As a collective of insurgents encircled the sultan during a hunting expedition with the intent to assassinate him, Atsız intervened precisely at

10 Cüveynî, *Cihângüşâ*, p.249; Taneri, "Hârizmşahlar", p.228.

11 İbnü'l-Esîr, *el-Kâmil*, VIII, p.407; Özaydın, "Hârezmşahlar Devleti", p.884.

12 Cüveynî, *Cihângüşâ*, p.250; Şebankareyî, *Mecmuaü'l-ensâb*, p.134; Mîrhând, *Ravzatu's-safâ*, IV, p.657; Kafesoğlu, *Hârezmşahlar*, p.44.

the critical moment and rescued the sultan from their grasp. Nevertheless, Atsız's prominent status in the perception of Sultan Sanjar engendered envy among other statesmen toward the Governor of Khwarezm, leading to various efforts designed to undermine the relationship between him and the sultan.

During the Seljuk Sultan's campaigns against Ghazni in 1135 and Balkh in 1136, one of the individuals accompanying him was Atsız. During this time, Atsız, who accompanied Sultan Sanjar, noted the behaviors of other emirs and discerned their intention to adversely affect the Sultan's perception of him. Perturbed by this circumstance, Atsız expressed his desire to depart from Sanjar and sought the Sultan's authorization to return to Khwarezm. As Atsız left, the Sultan informed his subordinates that Atsız would no longer serve his interests. The emirs inquired of Sultan Sanjar as to his rationale for permitting the Khwarezmshah to depart under such circumstances. The Sultan articulated that Atsız and his family had significantly contributed to the Seljuk state, rendering it imprudent to subject him to ill treatment.[13]

Atsız, upon his arrival in Khwarezm, commenced operations autonomously from Sultan Sanjar. Following the capture of Jend and Mangishlak, the Khwarezmshah detained the Sultan's officials in Khwarezm and seized their assets, thereby obstructing the pathways to Khorasan.[14] Following these events, Sanjar was forced to step in and launched a campaign to Khwarezm. During the months of September–October 1138, the Sultan mobilised against Atsız.[15] In response, Atsız promptly implemented defensive strategies; however, he was ultimately compelled to face Sultan Sanjar, and the ensuing conflict concluded with a Seljuk triumph. Despite Atsız successfully evading capture in Khwarezm amid the conflict, his son Atlığ was apprehended and subsequently executed. Following this achievement, Sultan Sanjar entrusted Khwarezm to his nephew, Malik Süleyman b. Muhammad, and subsequently returned to Khorasan. Nonetheless, Atsız subsequently returned to Khwarezm, killed the Seljuk ruler, and established dominion over Khorasan.[16]

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13 Cüveynî, Cihângüşâ, p.250-251; Faruk Sümer, "Atsız b. Muhammed", DİA, IV, p.91; Mehmet Altay Köymen, Büyük Selçuklu İmparatorluğu Tarihi, İkinci İmparatorluk Devri, V, Ankara 1991, p.312.

14 Barthold, Türkistan, p.347; Kafesoğlu, Hârezmşahlar, p.47.

15 İbnü'l-Esîr, el-Kâmil, IX,144; Cüveynî, Cihângüşâ, p.251; Aziz, Khwarazmshahs, p.5; Bünyadov, Enuşteginliler, p.5.

16 İbnü'l-Esîr, el-Kâmil, IX, p.144; Cüveynî, Cihângüşâ, p.251; Osman Gazi Özgüdenli, Selçuklular, I, Ankara 2013, p.268-269.



Sultan Sanjar experienced a significant defeat at the hands of the Kara-Khitans during the Battle of Qatwan in 1141. Upon becoming aware of the Seljuks' critical circumstances, Atsız promptly initiated a campaign to assert control over Khorasan. Initially, he advanced towards Sarakhs, subsequently laying siege to the city of Merv, ultimately capturing it on October 21, 1141. Atsız then returned to Khwarezm in the company of distinguished scholars, notably including Abu'l-Fadl al-Kirmānī.[17]

During this time, Sanjar rejuvenated his strength and initiated a second campaign against Khwarezm in 1143. However, Atsız did not succeed in his endeavours against the Seljuk Sultan and sought clemency from Sanjar, expressing remorse for his conduct. Sultan Sanjar subsequently granted his plea for forgiveness.[18]

After these occurrences, Sanjar returned to Khorasan; however, this time, Atsız dispatched two assassins to Merv with the objective of assassinating Sultan Sanjar. The person who informed the Sultan regarding this conspiracy was Edib Sābir, dispatched by Sanjar as an emissary to observe the actions of Atsız. Ultimately, while the assassins were apprehended and executed in Merv, Atsız, cognizant of the circumstances, ordered Edib Sābir to be cast into the Jeyhun River, resulting in his demise.[19] Following these dire developments, Sultan Sanjar launched a third campaign against Khwarezm, first capturing Hezaresb.[20] He then besieged Gurganj, but Atsız once again begged for clemency. On this occasion, Sanjar announced his willingness to grant Atsız a pardon, provided that he publicly commits to an allegiance. Nonetheless, on June 2, 1148, Atsız presented himself to Sultan Sanjar, acknowledging him with a mere nod without dismounting from his horse, and then departed. Unwilling to engage in a fresh conflict, Sanjar retreated to Khorasan.[21] Atsız subsequently directed his focus toward the area occupied by the Kipchaks and launched an offensive against the governor of Jend, Kemal

17 İbnü'l-Esîr, *el-Kâmil*, IX, p.159-160; Kafesoğlu, *Hârezmşahlar*, p.56; Özaydın, "Hârezmşahlar Devleti," p.885.

18 İbnü'l-Esîr, *el-Kâmil*, IX, p.167.

19 Cüveynî, *Cihângüşâ*, p.252-253; Mîrhând, *Ravzatu's-safâ*, IV, p.359; Barthold, *Türkistan*, p.350; Pınar Kaya Tan, "Tarihî Yönü ve Faaliyetleriyle Selçuklu Döneminden Bir Şair: Edîb Sâbir" *Selçuklu Medeniyeti Araştırmaları Dergisi*, No.8 (2023), p.62-63.

20 Cüveynî, *Cihângüşâ*, p.253; Kafesoğlu, *Hârezmşahlar*, p.58.

21 Cüveynî, *Cihângüşâ*, p.254; Köprülü, "Hârizmşahlar", 267; Aziz, *Khwārazmshāhs*, 8; Özgüdenli, *Selçuklular*, p.277-278.

al-Din, culminating in the capture of the city. He later designated his son İlarslan as the governor of that region.[22]

Sultan Sanjar was overcome and captured in April 1153 during the skirmish he fought against the Oghuz tribes that had rebelled against him.[23] In response to the aforementioned events, Atsız initiated a conflict with the Oghuz under the guise of advocating for justice for Sultan Sanjar. As Atsız progressed towards the Amu Darya, he failed to seize control of the city. Subsequent to Sultan Sanjar's capture, his nephew, Mahmud Khan, was designated as the leader of the Seljuks and sought aid from Atsız. As Atsız, along with his son İlarslan, journeyed to assist Mahmud and encountered him, Sultan Sanjar was liberated from his confinement. In reaction to this event, the Khwarezmshah Atsız conveyed a congratulatory message to Sanjar and additionally established an accord with Mahmud Khan, thereby fortifying the amity between the two. Subsequently, after these events, Atsız experienced a stroke while residing in Habushan and, debilitated by the condition, died on July 30, 1156.[24] Atsız was a well-educated and cultured person, possessing a courageous and combative nature. In addition to these qualities, he also valued art and science.[25] During the phase in which the Seljuk state was undergoing its ultimate decline and substantial weakening, Atsız's confrontation with Sultan Sanjar not only exacerbated the state's deterioration but also commenced the transition towards independence for the Khwarezmshah.

İlarslan (1156-1172)

During his lifetime, Atsız appointed his son İlarslan as his successor, articulating his wish for İlarslan to be his successor. Upon receiving news of his father's demise, İlarslan swiftly traveled to Khwarezm, where he initially incarcerated his brother, Süleyman. He subsequently assumed power on August 22, 1156, and proclaimed his loyalty to Sultan Sanjar.[26] Nonetheless, following the demise of the

[22] Cüveynî, *Cihângüşâ*, p.254-255; Kafesoğlu, *Hârezmşahlar*, p.67.

[23] Mehmet Altay Köymen, "Büyük Selçuklu İmparatorluğu Tarihinde Oğuz İstilası", *DTCF Dergisi*, V (1947), p.564-565; Râmîn Sultânî, "Fitne-i Guz der Horasan," *İrân şinaht*, 16-(1379 prep.), p.231

[24] Cüveynî, *Cihângüşâ*, p.255-256; Sümer, "Atsız b. Muhammed", p.92.

[25] Cüveynî, *Cihângüşâ*, p.250; Bünyadov, *Enuşteginliler*, p.3. Cûzcânî, *Tabakât-ı Nâsırî*, I, Tahran 1389 prep. 299.

[26] İbnü'l-Esîr, *el-Kâmil*, IX, p.254; Bünyadov, *Enuşteginliler*, p.27.

Seljuk Sultan on May 8, 1157, İlarslan endeavoured to cultivate amiable relations with Mahmud Khan, who succeeded Sanjar.[27] During his reign as Khwarezmshah, İlarslan carefully managed local affairs, maintaining relations both with the Seljuks and with the Oghuz leader Müeyyed Ayaba, who desired to establish a foothold in the area.

Mahmud Khan, who succeeded to the throne after the demise of Sultan Sanjar, regrettably proved to be an insufficient administrator in the realm of state governance. Simultaneously, Giyās al-Dīn Muhammad, who governed the Seljuks of Iraq, sought to attain the position of Great Sultan. Perceiving the Abbasid Caliph as an impediment to this aspiration, Giyās al-Dīn implored İlarslan to serve as an intermediary between himself and the Caliph. İlarslan consented to this request and dispatched a message to the Caliph, making efforts to reconcile the two parties.[28] Concurrently, Müeyyed Ayaba, the Oghuz leader endeavouring to secure supremacy in Nishapur and its adjacent regions in Khorasan, successfully apprehended Mahmud Khan. The Seljuk Sultan passed away during the period from August to September 1162.[29]

In 1165, when Müeyyed Ayaba laid siege to the city of Nisa, İlarslan aimed to impede him by dispatching an army to the region of Khorasan. Upon discovering the impending arrival of the Khwarezmshah's troops, Müeyyed Ayaba was necessitated to retreat. Simultaneously, the army of İlarslan progressed against Ihtiyāreddīn Aytak in Dihistan, who had initially recognized the authority of the Khwarezmshah but subsequently engaged in rebellious behavior. Consequently, Dihistan fell under the authority of the Khwarezmshah.[30] Continuing the contest against Müeyyed Ayaba, the Khwarezmshah ordered the khutbah to be delivered in his name in the cities of Sabzevar and Nishapur.[31] Having failed to attain victory over İlarslan, Müeyyed Ayaba was compelled to acknowledge the authority of the Khwarezmshah and proclaimed that the khutbah would be recited in İlarslan's name throughout the territories under his governance.[32]

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27 Cüveynî, *Cihângüşâ*, p.257; Kafesoğlu, *Hârezmşahlar*, p.73-74.

28 Reşîdeddîn Vatvat, *Umdetü'l-bulegâ ve Uddetü'l-fusahâ*, Ayasofya nr.4159, vr.5b; Kafesoğlu, *Hârezmşahlar*, p.75; Azar Nasırabadı, *Diplomasi ve Elçilik Faaliyetleri,* p.88-89.

29 Cüveynî, *Cihângüşâ*, p.258; Mîrhând, *Ravzatu's-safâ*, IV, p.364.

30 İbnü'l-Esîr, *el-Kâmil*, IX, 333; Bünyadov, *Enuşteginliler*, p.32; Özaydın, "Hârezmşahlar Devleti", p.887.

31 İbn Funduk, *Târih-i Beyhak*, [date unknown], [place of publication unknown], p.284; Kafesoğlu, *Hârezmşahlar*, p.78.

32 Sadreddîn Ebü'l-Hasan el-Hüseynî, *Ahbârü'd-Devleti's-Selçukiyye*, trans. Necati Lugal, Ankara 1999, p.115; Kafesoğlu, *Hârezmşahlar*, p.78-79.

İlarslan was additionally required to address the developments in Transoxiana. In fact, after the Khan of Samarkand, Celaleddin—known as Kök-Sagun—assassinated Yabgu Khan, a prominent Karluk chieftain, the remaining Karluk leaders under Laçin Bey sought refuge in Khwarezm and appealed to İlarslan for aid. In reaction to this circumstance, İlarslan intervened by traveling to Transoxiana in July 1158. Kök-Sagun sought aid from the Kara-Khitans, who dispatched Ilig Türkmen along with a force of 10,000 soldiers. Ultimately, the two parties encountered one another in conflict. In the presence of the Khwarezmshah's forces, Ilig Türkmen conveyed an intention to engage in negotiations; İlarslan acknowledged this overture and subsequently directed the return of the Karluk chieftains. Shortly thereafter, during the period of 1170-1171, the Kara-Khitans progressed towards Khwarezm. In response, İlarslan dispatched Ayyar Bey, a member of the Karluks from Transoxiana, along with the vanguard troops to Amuye. While he departed with the principal army in support, the engagement commenced prior to his arrival, resulting in the defeat and capture of Ayyar Bey.[33] This defeat hastened the decline of İlarslan's, who was already suffering from ill health. After going back to Khwarezm, he died on March 19, 1172.[34] İlarslan was known as a just ruler and a generous person to his people.[35]

Alâeddîn Tekiş (1172-1200)

Following the demise of Khwarezmshah Ilarslan, his younger son, Sultan Shah Mahmud, who resided in Khwarezm and held the status of heir apparent, ascended to the throne. Through the influence of his mother, Terken Hatun, Sultan Shah Mahmud was elevated to the throne. Nevertheless, his elder sibling, Tekish, was then located in the city of Jand. In fact, Tekish endeavoured to acquire power and, aided by the military backing of the Karakhanids, progressed towards Khwarezm. Upon becoming aware of this development, Sultan Shah Mahmud was unable to engage his brother and was compelled to escape with his mother, Terken Hatun. Therefore, Tekish entered Khwarezm and assumed the throne without facing any

[33] Cüveynî, *Cihângüşâ*, p.257-258; Mîrhând, *Ravzatu's-safâ*, IV, p.364. Bünyadov, *Enuşteginliler*, p.36.

[34] Cüveynî, *Cihângüşâ*, p.258; Reşîdeddîn Fazlullah Hemedânî, *Câmiu't-tevârîh*, I, 1373 prep. 342.

[35] Cûzcânî, *Tabakât-ı Nâsırî*, I, p.300.



resistance.[36] Sultan Shah Mahmud then engaged in a power struggle that would last twenty-one years to reclaim the throne.[37]

After leaving Khwarezm, Sultan Shah Mahmud first travelled to the Mazandaran Isfahbad.[38] Following that, he left there and went to the Oghuz Melik Müeyyed Ayaba. With his assistance, Sultan Shah Mahmud started a conflict against Alaeddin Tekish but was ultimately unsuccessful. Müeyyed Ayaba was captured by Tekish and then died on July 11, 1174. In pursuit of sanctuary, Sultan Shah Mahmud and his mother, Melike Terken, sought refuge in Dihistan. During this period, Alaeddin Tekish, who was in pursuit, successfully assassinated Melike Terken; however, he was unable to apprehend Sultan Shah Mahmud. Sultan Shah subsequently traveled to Nishapur, where he endeavoured to obtain the backing of Müeyyed Ayaba's son, Togan Shah, though his efforts proved futile. Subsequently, he sought aid from the Ghurids.[39]

The Karakhanids, who endorsed Khwarezmshah Tekish, subsequently arrived in Khwarezm to levy taxes. During this period, Tekish, irked by the ostentatious conduct of the envoys, orchestrated the assassination of one of them. This event led to a division between the two parties, and Sultan Shah Mahmud, aiming to exploit the circumstances, departed from the Ghurids. He engaged in negotiations with the Karakhanids, informing them that the populace of Khwarezm held him in high regard, and with their endorsement, he proceeded towards Khwarezm. Upon discovering the alliance between Sultan Shah Mahmud and the Karakhanids, Alaeddin Tekish adopted a defensive posture. The Karakhanids acknowledged that the city lacked genuine acceptance of Sultan Shah and consequently opted to retreat. Sultan Shah, nevertheless, implored that they provide him with a contingent of troops. The Karakhanids acceded to this request, providing soldiers to accompany him as they withdrew from Khwarezm. Faced with no other options, Sultan

36 Cüveynî, *Cihângüşâ*, p.258; Reşîdeddîn, *Câmiü't-tevârih,* I, p.343; Hamdullah Müstevfî, *Tarîh-i Güzîde*, p.492; Mîrhând, *Ravzatu's-safâ*, IV, 366; Kafesoğlu, *Hârezmşahlar*, p.84-85.

37 For detailed information about Sultanshah Mahmud's struggle for the throne, see Gülseren Ceceli, *Hârezmşâh Hükümdarı Sultanşah Mahmud (567-589/1172-1193)*, Unpublished MA Thesis, Marmara Üniversitesi Türkiyat Araştırmaları Enstitüsü, Istanbul 2006.

38 İbn İsfendiyar, *Tarih-i Taberistân*, II, Tashih: Abbas İkbal, [date unknown], [place of publication unknown], 114; Zahireddîn Ma-raşi, *Tarih-i Taberistân u Ruyan-I Mazenderan*, Tahran 1966, p.108.

39 Cüveynî, *Cihângüşâ,* p.259-260; Reşîdeddîn, *Câmiü't-tevârih*, I, p.343-344; Mîrhând, *Ravzatu's-safâ*, IV, p.367; Aziz, *Khwārazmshāhs*, p.17; Bünyadov, *Enuşteginliler*, p.38.

Shah Mahmud proceeded to Khorasan and endeavoured to establish his authority in the region, successfully taking control of Tus, Merv, Serahs, and their surrounding territories.[40] In 1186, Alaeddin Tekish intervened in the tumultuous circumstances prevailing in Khorasan; however, Sultan Shah perceived this as an advantageous opportunity and initiated a military campaign against Khwarezm. Tekish, in the interim, had arrived in Merv. Nevertheless, when the inhabitants of Khwarezm denied Sultan Shah Mahmud entry into Gurganj, he proceeded to besiege Merv and successfully infiltrated the city.[41]

Tekish, situated in Khorasan, executed Mengli Bey, an associate of Müeyyed Ayaba, owing to his insubordinate conduct, and in 1187, he seized Nishapur. He designated his eldest son, Nasir al-Din Malikshah, to administer the city. Nevertheless, upon the arrival of Sultan Shah Mahmud at the site, a confrontation ensued between the two parties. In response to his son Nasir al-Din's plea for aid, Tekish intervened, leading to Sultan Shah's withdrawal. Subsequent to this occurrence, a peace treaty was established between Alaeddin Tekish and Sultan Shah Mahmud, conferring the districts of Jam, Baharz, and Zir-i Pul to Sultan Shah. Nevertheless, when his brother engaged in disruptive conduct that threatened the peace, Alaeddin Tekish initiated a campaign in 1190-1191, despite a subsequent reconciliation achieved between the siblings. Nevertheless, this proved to be transient. Capitalizing on Alaeddin Tekish's campaign against the Seljuks of Iraq, Sultan Shah Mahmud advanced towards Khwarezm. Nevertheless, upon becoming aware of his brother's impending arrival, he relinquished this strategy. Subsequent to these occurrences, the governor of Serahs dispatched a communication to Alaeddin Tekish, inviting the Khwarezmshah to the region. He subsequently relinquished both the fortress and the treasures of Sultan Shah Mahmud to Tekish. Following the awareness of these developments, Sultan Shah Mahmud passed away in the city of Merv on September 29, 1193. With the territories under his control Alaeddin Tekish, consequently strengthened his command in Khorasan.

Khwarezmshah Alaeddin Tekish intervened in the developments occurring within the Seljuk Sultanate of Iraq, perceiving this as an opportunity to augment his territorial boundaries. Undoubtedly, during this time, Sultan Tughril III was exonerated from incarceration and reestablished authority over his nation. Kutluk

[40] İbnü'l-Esîr, *el-Kâmil*, IX, s.380; Cüveynî, *Cihângüşâ*, p.260-261; Reşîdeddîn, *Câmiü't-tevârih*, I, p.344-345; Mîrhând, *Ravzatu's-safâ*, IV, p.368.

[41] Cüveynî, *Cihângüşâ*, p.262-263; Mîrhând, *Ravzatu's-safâ*, IV, p.369.

Inanç, a nephew of Qizil Arslan, the Atabeg of Azerbaijan who governed the Seljuks of Iraq for an extended period, sought aid from Khwarezmshah Alaeddin Tekish in opposition to Sultan Tughril. In 1192, as a result, Tekish entered Iraq, seized the Tabarak Castle, and progressed towards Ray. After this event, a truce was established between Ala al-Din Tekish and Sultanshah Mahmud, and the territories of Jam, Baharz, and Zir-i Pul were given to Sultanshah. Nevertheless, Sultan Tughril earnestly requested forgiveness from the Khwarezmshah, while Tekish deployed a contingent of troops in Ray and subsequently returned to Khwarezm in 1193. Taking advantage of the opportunity of Tekish's return to his country, Sultan Tughril apprehended Tabarak and killed Emir Tamgach, Tekish's deputy.[42] Nonetheless, when his sibling began to display disruptive behavior that threatened the peace, ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn Tekish embarked on a campaign in 1190–1191. Yet, peace was once again achieved between the two brothers. However, the cease fire did not last long. Taking the opportunity that arose by Tekish's campaign against the Iraq Seljuks, Sultan Shāh Maḥmūd proceeded toward Khwarazm. After finding out that his elder brother was marching against him, he forfeited this plan. Subsequently, the governor of Sarakhs sent word to Tekish and invited the Khwarazmshah to the city, which resulted in the surrendering of both the fortress and Sultan Shāh Maḥmūd's treasures to him. Upon hearing of these developments, Sultan Shāh Maḥmūd died in the city of Merv on 29 September 1193. With the lands formerly under his authority now passing into Tekish's possession, the latter consolidated his power over Khurasan. Khwarazmshah ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn Tekish also meddled in the affairs of the Iraq Seljuks, viewing them as an opportunity to expand his realm. At this time, Sultan Ṭughril III had been released from captivity and had again taken control of his realm. Kutluq Inanj, nephew of Qizil Arslan of the Atabegs of Azerbaijan, who had long controlled the Iraq Seljuks, sought Tekish's support against Sultan Ṭughril. In response, Tekish entered Iraq in 1192, took the fortress of Ṭabarak, and proceeded toward Rayy. However, Sultan Ṭughril petitioned for pardon from the Khwarazmshah, whereupon Tekish left a contingent of troops in Rayy and returned to Khwarazm in 1193.[43] Taking advantage of the opportunity of Tekish's return to his country, Sultan Tughril apprehended Tabarak and

[42] Cüveynî, *Cihângüşâ*, p.268; Hüseyin Kayhan, *Irak Selçukluları*, Konya 2001, p.315.

[43] İbnü'l-Esîr, *el-Kâmil*, IX, 596-597; Cüveynî, *Cihângüşâ*, p.266-267; Reşîdeddîn, *Câmiü't-tevârih*, I, p.348; Aziz, *Khwarazmshahs*, p.23-24; Azar Nasırabadı, *Diplomasi ve Elçilik Faaliyetleri*, p.65-66.

killed Emir Tamgach, Tekish's deputy.[44] After this, he began making plans against Tekish, knowing that Tekish would soon advance upon him. In the meantime, the Khwarazmshah, learning of the situation also took action against Ṭughril and sent Kutluq Inanj as a vanguard to Rayy after confronting him at Simnan.[45]

Subsequently, in anticipation of an expected assault by Tekish, Tughril encountered resistance. Subsequently, upon becoming aware of the circumstances, Khwārazmshāh Tekish intervened by dispatching Kutluk Inanç as the vanguard to Ray, who then encountered Tughril at Simnan.[46] Despite advised to make peace with Alaeddin Tekish, Sultan Tughril advanced to within three farsakhs of Ray.[47] n the confrontation with the vanguard commanded by Kutluk Inanç, Sultan Tughril experienced defeat and was consequently subjected to siege and ultimately assassinated on March 24, 1194. Subsequent to this occurrence, Tekish advanced from Ray to Hamadan, capturing the majority of Iraq-i Acem, thus concluding the Seljuk presence in Iraq.[48]

When Khwārazmshāh Alaeddin Tekish advanced against the Seljuks of Iraq, the Abbasid Caliph al-Nasir li-Din Allah sent a decree to the sultan through his envoy, bestowing him the territories of this state.[49] Following the dissolution of the Seljuk Sultanate of Iraq, the caliph sought a portion of the state's territories for his own use. Nevertheless, Alaeddin Tekish demonstrated an adverse reaction to this inquiry. In reaction, al-Nasir dispatched his vizier, Muayyad al-Din ibn al-Kassab, to Tekish. The vizier was accompanied by a force exceeding 10,000 soldiers. Muayyad al-Din progressed as far as Asadabad and dispatched a communication to Tekish, conveying that, in his capacity as the caliph's vizier, he anticipated Tekish to join his service. Khwārazmshāh reacted to Muayyad al-Din's request by deploying military forces against him. In response to this situation, the vizier sought

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44 Cüveynî, *Cihângüşâ*, p.268; Hüseyin Kayhan, *Irak Selçukluları*, Konya 2001, p.315.

45 İbnü'l-Esîr, *el-Kâmil*, IX, p.597; Cüveynî, *Cihângüşâ*, p.268; Reşîdeddîn, *Câmiü't-tevârih*, I, p.349.

46 İbnü'l-Esîr, *el-Kâmil,* IX, p.597; Cüveynî, *Cihângüşâ*, p.268; Reşîdeddîn, *Câmiü't-tevârih*, I, p.349.

47 Hüseynî, *Ahbârü'd-Devleti's-Selçukiyye*, p.134-135; Özaydın, "Hârezmşahlar Devleti," p.889; Kafesoğlu, *Hârezmşahlar*, p.125.

48 Cüveynî, *Cihângüşâ,* p.268-269; Reşîdeddîn, *Câmiü't-tevârih*, I, p.349-350; Faruk Sümer, "Tuğrul II", *DİA*, XLI, p.344.

49 İbnü'l-Esîr, *el-Kâmil*, IX, p.597; Reşîdeddîn, *Câmiü't-tevârih*, I, p.350; Mîrhând, *Ravzatu's-safâ*, IV, p.375-376; Kafesoğlu, *Harzmşahlar*, p.125; On the relations of the Kharezmshahs with the Abbasid Caliphate for detailed information see Gülseren Azar Nasırabadı, "Hârezmşâhlar Devleti'nin Abbâsî Halifeliği Üzerinde Hakimiyet Kurma Çabaları", *Ortaçağ Tarihçiliğinde Bir Duayen, Prof. Dr. Abdülkerim Özaydın'a Armağan*, ed. E. Altan et.al., 2020, p.505-520.



sanctuary in Baghdad. Sultan Tekish pursued Muayyad al-Din up to Dinavar before advancing to Hamadan. He allocated the acquired territories to his commanders.[50]

Alaeddin Tekish delegated the governance of Rayy to his son, Yunus Khan, and designated Emir Mayacuk as his atabeg. In the interim, despite the caliphate forces initiating a reinvigorated offensive after Tekish's return to Khwarezm, Yunus Khan successfully defended against their assault.[51] Nevertheless, following Yunus Khan's onset of an ocular ailment and his departure from Rayy, the governance remained under Mayacuk's authority. In this period, the forces of the caliph were once more activated. To address the intensifying circumstances, Tekish returned to Iraq in 1196, where he successfully engaged and defeated the Baghdad army near Hamadan, leading to the army's dispersal. Simultaneously, Vizier Muayyad al-Din also passed away in Hamadan.[52] Following these events, Tekish, having grown considerably stronger, acted against the rebellious Mayacuk and came to Khorasan in 1198 to punish the emir. Meanwhile, a decree from the caliph was sent to Tekish, granting him sovereignty over the lands of Khorasan, Iraq, and Turkestan.[53]

In 1198–1199, Alaeddin Tekish initiated a campaign targeting the Ismailis. He seized Arslanguşa Castle, a significant stronghold for them, and subsequently eliminated numerous Ismailis. In response, the Ismailis assassinated Tekish's vizier, Nizamülmülk Mesud. Upon receiving the information, the Khwarezmshah promptly sent his son Kutbeddin Muhammad, accompanied by a substantial army, to the area populated by the Ismailis, where the prince subsequently besieged Turshiz. During this period, Tekish started experiencing dyspnea. Despite his physicians' recommendation against travel, he journeyed to Turshiz to provide support to Kutbeddin Muhammad. En route, Tekish's condition deteriorated, culminating in his death on July 3, 1200.[54] Tekish was a ruler known for his courage, justice, and generosity, and he was also a well-educated.[55]

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50 Cüveynî, *Cihângüşâ*, p.269; Reşîdeddîn, *Câmiü't-tevârih*, I, p.350-351; Mîrhând, *Ravzatu's-safa*, IV, p.375.

51 Cüveynî, *Cihângüşâ*, p.269-270.

52 İbnü'l-Esîr, *el-Kâmil*, X, p.2; Cüveynî, *Cihângüşâ*, p.271-272.

53 Cüveynî, *Cihângüşâ*, p.272-275; On Mayacuk and his activities, see Gülseren Azar Nasırabadı, "Hârezmşâhlar Dönemi Emirlerinden Mayacuk/Mayancuk ve Faaliyetleri", *Marmara Üniversitesi Türkiyat Araştırmaları Dergisi*, VII/2, p.267-286.

54 İbnü'l-Esîr, *el-Kâmil*, X, p.33; Cüveynî, *Cihângüşâ*, p.277; Reşîdeddîn, *Câmiü't-tevârih*, I, p.402-403; Kafesoğlu, *Hârezmşahlar*, p.146; Meryem Gürbüz, "Tekiş, Alâeddin", *DİA*, XL, p.365.

55 İbnü'l-Esîr, *el-Kâmil*, X, p.36; İbn Kesîr, *el-Bidâye ve'n-nihâye*, XII, Turkish trans. Mehmet Keskin, Istanbul 1995, p.99.

Alâeddîn Muhammed (1200-1220)

After the death of Alāeddīn Tekish, his son Kutbeddīn Muḥammad, who was his successor, came to the throne on August 3, 1200, taking the title of "Alāeddīn."[56] Initially, the Khwārazmshāh encountered difficulties stemming from the Ghurids, who, upon discovering the demise of Tekish and the subsequent succession of his son, initiated incursions into Khwārazmshāh territories. They captured cities including Merv, Tus, and Nishapur. Subsequently, Alāeddīn Muḥammad proceeded into the region of Khorasan. Simultaneously, Hindushah, the nephew of the sultan, defected to the Ghurid faction and was subsequently employed against the Khwārazmshāh. In an effort to reassert authority over Khorasan, Alāeddīn Muḥammad successfully reclaimed Merv and Sarakhs prior to his return to Khwarezm.[57] During this time, the Ghurid ruler Ghiyāth al-Dīn passed away, initiating internal disputes within the Ghurid dynasty. Capitalizing on this upheaval, Sultan Alaeddin Muhammad initiated a siege of Herat in 1204; however, his efforts proved unsuccessful, leading to his eventual retreat to Merv. During this period, the Ghurids were under the leadership of Shihāb al-Dīn, the brother of Ghiyāth al-Dīn, who subsequently conducted a siege of Khwarezm. While receiving reinforcements from Khorasan, Alāeddīn Muḥammad also secured backing from the Kara-Khitans. Despite the Ghurid siege of Gurganj, they were compelled to retreat and experienced defeat owing to the assistance provided by Karakhanid Sultan Osman and the Kara-Khitans.[58] In 1206, Ghurid Sultan Shihāb al-Dīn was murdered during his return trip from a campaign in India, which drove the state into internal chaos.[59]

Capitalising on this situation, Alāeddīn Tekish took cities such as Herat and Balkh, thereby setting the foundation for his dominance in these regions.[60]

Sultan Alāeddīn Muḥammad was diligently observing the developments in Transoxiana. The Karakhanids who inhabited the region were annually extracting taxes from the Khwarezmshah, a practice that significantly dissatisfied Sultan Alāeddīn. The Karakhanids were subjected to pressure from the Karakhtays, while the local populace appealed to the Sultan for aid. As a result, in 1207, Khwarezmshah Alaeddin Muhammad initiated a movement towards Transoxiana. Concurrently,

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56 Cüveynî, *Cihângüşâ*, p.277-278; Aziz, *Khwārazmshāhs*, p.37; Abdülkerim Özaydın, "Muhammed b. Tekiş", *DİA*, XXX, p.579.

57 İbnü'l-Esîr, *el-Kâmil*, X, p.48-49; Cüveynî, *Cihângüşâ*, p.278-279.

58 İbnü'l-Esîr, *el-Kâmil*, X, p.58; Cüveynî, *Cihângüşâ*, p.280-283.

59 İbnü'l-Esîr, *el-Kâmil*, X, p.77; Cüveynî, *Cihângüşâ*, p.285.

60 Cüveynî, *Cihângüşâ*, p.288-289; Özaydın, "Hârezmşahlar Devleti," p.891.



the Khan of Samarkand, Sultan Osman, committed his endorsement. Alāeddīn Muḥammad initially arrived in Bukhara and subsequently proceeded to Samarkand. In 1210, the Khwarezmshah and the Karakhtays participated in a significant confrontation, culminating in a conclusive triumph for Sultan Alāeddīn.[61] Subsequent to this achievement, the Sultan was conferred the epithet "Iskandar-i Sani" (the Second Alexander); nevertheless, Alāeddīn Muḥammad rejected this epithet and chose the name "Sanjar" to denote the durability of his rule.[62] Sultan Alāeddīn had now brought both Samarkand and Bukhara under his control. He returned to Khwarezm together with Sultan Osman.[63]

The Khan of Samarkand, Sultan Osman, had previously asked for the hand of the daughter Karakhtay Khan Gürhan but was turned down. Following the notable triumph, he achieved alongside Alāeddīn Muḥammad, he voiced his wish to marry the Sultan's daughter, Khān Sultan. This proposal was favorably received by the Khwarezmshah, and Khān Sultan and Sultan Osman were married.[64] Capitalizing on Sultan Osman's presence in Khwarezm, the Karakhtays initiated a new offensive; however, they retreated upon receiving news of Alāeddīn Muḥammad's arrival.[65] Sultan ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn had at this point brought both Samarqand and Bukhara under his realm. He then returned to Khwarazm together with Sultan ʿUthmān. Sultan Osman swiftly accompanied his spouse back to Samarkand. Nevertheless, after a period, he formed a coalition with the Karakhtay Khan Gürhan in opposition to the Khwarezmshah. Sultan Osman's disposition toward both the Sultan and his daughter underwent a transformation, leading to the maltreatment of Khān Sultan. Upon being informed of these occurrences, the Sultan promptly journeyed to Samarkand, seized control of the city, and mandated the execution of Sultan Osman.[66] Thus, in 1212, the Kara-Khanid State met its demişe and its remaining territories fell under the control of the Khwarezmshah.

Sultan Alāeddīn Muḥammad also sought to consolidate the regions of Kerman and Sīstān under his control. Accordingly, at the request of the Malik of Zawzan,

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61 İbnü'l-Esîr, *el-Kâmil*, X, p.112-113, 120; Cüveynî, *Cihângüşâ*, p.296-298.

62 Cüveynî, *Cihângüşâ*, p.298-299; Bünyadov, *Enuşteginliler*, p.83.

63 İbnü'l-Esîr, *el-Kâmil*, X, p.121; Cüveynî, *Cihângüşâ*, p.301.

64 Cüveynî, *Cihângüşâ*, p.300; for information about the marriage of Han Sultan and Sultan Osman, see Gülseren Ceceli, "Hârezmşâhlar Devleti Siyasetinde Kadın'ın Yeri ve Önemi", *Ortaçağ'da Kadın*, Ankara 2011, p.489.

65 Cüveynî, *Cihângüşâ*, p.301.

66 İbnü'l-Esîr, *el-Kâmil*, X, p.121-122; Cüveynî, *Cihângüşâ*, p.332-333.

Kiwām al-Mulk, the Khwarezmshah assisted him with the provision of troops and delegated him the task of capturing Kerman. Kiwām al-Mulk launched his campaign in February–March 1211 and was victorious in capturing Kerman. As a result of this achievement, the administration of the region was granted to him.[67] He persisted in his progression and overcame Ḥarb b. Muḥammad in Sīstān, consequently establishing dominion over that region as well. Consequently, Kerman and Sīstān fell under the rule of the Khwarezmshah. During this time, the khutbah was delivered in the name of Sultan Alāeddīn Muḥammad in the significant trade hub of Hormuz and in select regions of Oman.

During the rule of Alāeddīn Muḥammad, the territories of ʻIrāq-i ʻAjam and Fārs similarly fell under the authority of the Khwarezmshah. In particular, the Atabeg of Azerbaijan, Özbek, had delegated the governance of ʻIrāq-i ʻAjam to Ogılmış.[68] Ogılmış pledged allegiance to Alāeddīn Muḥammad and began to have the khutbah proclaimed in the sultan's name.[69] The Abbasid Caliph al-Nāṣir, seeking assistance from the Ismāʻīlī leader Jalāl al-Dīn Ḥasan, was responsible for organising the assassination of Ogılmış by an Ismāʻīlī assassin in 1217–1218.[70] Upon learning of these dire events, Alāeddīn Muḥammad set out to travel to ʻIrāq. In the meanwhile, the lands left unoccupied by Ogılmış were captured by Atabeg Özbek and the Atabeg of Fārs, Saʻd.[71] Furthering his advance, Alāeddīn Muḥammad apprehended Saʻd, who was set free on the condition that he remain loyal to the sultan. Observing this, Atabeg Özbek was compelled to acquiesce to the authority of the Khwarezmshah. An accord was established between the two parties, in which Özbek proclaimed his intention to have the khutbah recited in the name of Sultan Alāeddīn Muḥammad within the territories under his jurisdiction.[72]

It is widely acknowledged that relations between the Abbasid Caliphate and the Khwarezmshah State were strained during the tenure of Alāeddīn Tekish. These relations further deteriorated during the rule of Sultan Alāeddīn. Caliph al-Nāṣir

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67 Hamideddîn Kirmânî, *el-Muzâf ila bedayiü'z-zaman fi vekâyi Kirmân*, 1391 prep., p.46-47.

68 İbnü'l-Esîr, *el-Kâmil*, X, p.155-159.

69 Nesevî, *Sîretü's-Sultân Celâleddîn Mengübertî*, Farsça, Mücteba Minovi, Tahran 1365 prep., p.22.

70 Nesevî, *Sîret*, p.21-22; İbnü'l-Esîr, *el-Kâmil*, X, 167; Cüveynî, *Cihângüşâ*, p.330; On the relations between the Ismailis and the Kharezmshahs, refer to Gülseren Ceceli Dursun, "Selçuklu Devleti Sonrası İsmâilîler'in Faaliyetleri ve Hârezmşâhlar ile Münasebetleri", *Bozkır'ın Oğlu Ahmet Taşağıl'a Armağan*, ed. Tuğba Eray Biber, Istanbul 2019, p.329-330.

71 Nesevî, *Sîret*, p.22.

72 İbnü'l-Esîr, *el-Kâmil*, X, p.168.



li-dīnillāh adopted a policy antagonistic to the Khwarezmshah. Furthermore, the consolidation of the state, the swift extension of its boundaries, and the domination of multiple regions during Sultan Alāeddīn's rule elicited significant apprehension from the Abbasid Caliph. Sultan Alaeddin expressed his dissatisfaction with the policies implemented by the caliph towards him. Considering the Khwarezmshah as the rightful rulers of the Islamic realm and the successors to the Seljuk Empire, Alāeddīn Muḥammad insisted on the delivery of a sermon in his name in Baghdad to affirm his dominance over the caliph. Nevertheless, the caliph consistently declined this appeal.[73] In reaction, Sultan Alāeddīn proclaimed the illegitimacy of the Abbasid caliphate and resolved to establish his own, nominating Alāʾ al-Mulk Tirmidhī, a sayyid, as the prospective caliph. [74]

Following these developments, Alaeddin Muhammad resolved to seize Baghdad in 1217 and implemented his plans accordingly. The Caliph al-Nāṣir, nevertheless, dispatched the esteemed scholar Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī as an emissary to discourage the sultan from undertaking this expedition.[75] Nevertheless, Suhrawardī had to return with nothing in hand.[76] Despite the fact that Khwarezmshāh dispatched an army to Baghdad, the troops faced severe weather conditions and were caught in a severe rain and snowstorm. The casulties were huge, and the Baghdad campaign ended in failure.[77] Alāeddīn Muḥammad arrived in Nishapur in 1218 and excised the caliph's name from the khutbah in that location. He then had the name of the caliph eliminated from the khutbah in cities such as Merv, Balkh, and Serahs. Nevertheless, in regions where his mother Terken Khatun and the ulema exerted influence, the khutbah persisted in being recited in the name of the Abbasid caliph.[78]

Among the most influential individuals in the Khwarezmshāh State was unquestionably Sultan Alāeddīn Muḥammad's mother, Terken Khatun. She acquired substantial authority, particularly following her son's accession to the throne, and eventually attained a status equivalent to that of the sultan. The principal rationale for this phenomenon was that Terken Khatun, who originated from the Kangly-Kipchak lineage, possessed the authority to direct emirs, commanders, and soldiers

73 Nesevî, *Sîret*, p.19-20.

74 Cüveynî, *Cihângüşâ*, p.311; Aziz, *Khwārazmshāhs*, p.72.

75 Nesevî, *Sîret*, p.32; Mîrhând, *Ravzatu's-safâ*, IV, p.399.

76 Nesevî, *Sîret*, p.20-21; İbn Kesîr, *el-Bidâye,* XIII, 180; Mîrhând, *Ravzatu's-safâ*, IV, p.400.

77 Nesevî, *Sîret*, p.32; İbnü'l-Esîr, *el-Kâmil*, X, p.168; Cüveynî, *Cihângüşâ*, p.312; Bünyadov, *Enuşteginliler*, p.94

78 İbnü'l-Esîr, *el-Kâmil*, X, p.169.

from her own tribal group. In fact, the sultan's mother designated her relatives to significant roles.[79] Terken Khatun possessed a substantial estate, enjoyed a private income, and had governmental officials under her command. Terken Hatun, who possessed the authority to utilize the treasury without restrictions, was advised by a distinct council comprising seven members. Her personal seal was inscribed with "asameddünya ve'd-din Uluğ Terken Melike nîsa el-âlemîn." Utilizing this authority, Sultan ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn had at this point brought both Samarqand and Bukhara under his realm. He then returned to Khwarazm together with Sultan ʿUthmān.[80]

The Mongol Empire, founded by Genghis Khan, quickly rose to prominence over an extensive territory. In pursuit of further territorial expansion, Genghis Khan emphasized the significance of trade. The initial engagements with the Khwarezmshah, who were then at the zenith of their influence in the western regions adjacent to the Mongols, commenced through trade interactions around 1215–1216. Nevertheless, Sultan Alāeddīn Muḥammad pursued a prudent strategy in relation to the Mongols. Diplomatic representatives were exchanged, establishing relations between the two parties, which ultimately culminated in a friendship and trade agreement.[81] In 1218, Genghis Khan dispatched a caravan of 450 merchants to the Khwarezmshah. However, upon reaching Otrar, the local governor made allegations of espionage and subsequently Inalchik, and its members were captured and executed.[82] When Genghis Khan was informed about this, he was angered and insisted that Sultan Alāeddīn Muḥammad release Inalchik. The sultan declined the Mongol Khan's request.[83] Subsequently, vowing revenge, Genghis Khan mobilized his army and marched toward the Khwarezmshah territory in 1220.[84]

After becoming aware of the Mongols' progression, Khwarezmshah Alāeddīn Muḥammad opted for a defensive approach in response to Genghis Khan. At this juncture, he committed a significant strategic misstep by dispersing his

79 İbnü'l Esîr, *el-Kâmil*, X, p.283; Cüveynî, *Cihangüşâ,* p.147.

80 Nesevî, *Sîret*, p.38.

81 Nesevî, *Sîret*, p.49; Cûzcânî, *Tabakât-ı Nâsırî*, II, p.103.

82 Nesevî, *Sîret* p.50-51; İbnü'l-Esîr, *el-Kâmil*, X, p.213-214; Cüveynî, *Cihângüşâ*, p.117-118; Reşîdeddîn, *Câmiü't-tevârih*, I, p.474; Mîrhând, *Ravzatu's-safa*, IV, p.402; İbrahim Tîmûrî, *İmparatori-ye Mogol*, Tahran 1377 prep., p.174-175; Hüseyin Alyârî, "Çengiz Han-ı Moğol", *Neşriyye-yi Dâneşkede-yi Edebiyât ve Ulûm-e İnsânî Tebriz*, No.86, 1347 prep., p.258; Seyid Kâzım Rûhânî, "Sultan Muhammed Hârezmşâh ve Koştâr-e Tâcîrân-e Mogol", *Hücum-e Mogol be İrân ve Peyamedhâ-yi Ân*, I, 1379 prep., p.653-667.

83 Nesevî, *Sîret*, p.52; Cüveynî, *Cihângüşâ*, p.118-119.

84 Cüveynî, *Cihângüşâ*, p.119.

troops to protect urban centers instead of engaging the Mongol army with a cohesive and substantial force. Genghis Khan initially advanced on Otrar, successfully seizing the city. He subsequently effortlessly seized control of Jand, Sygnak, Barçınlıgkent, Benaket, and Khujand.[85] Genghis Khan then successfully seized Bukhara and Samarkand, and within the regions he had conquered, he executed numerous individuals while also capturing others as prisoners. These urban centers, each serving as a significant hub of knowledge and culture, experienced considerable devastation.[86] Confronted with the swift advance of Genghis Khan, Khwārazmshāh Alāeddīn Muḥammad initially sought refuge in Balkh, subsequently moving to Tus, and ultimately settling in Nishapur. He subsequently relocated to Iraq and ultimately reached Mazandaran. Concurrently, the forces of Genghis Khan were engaged in an extensive search for the sultan throughout the region. Alāeddīn Muḥammad, in his attempt to evade capture, was compelled to relocate numerous times. In Mazandaran, often changing locations, the sultan arrived at a minor island within Abaskun, situated on the Caspian Sea. Simultaneously, Terken Hatun, residing in Khwarezm, upon the approach of Genghis Khan towards Gurganj, seized the sultan's treasures and harem and sought refuge in the Ilal Castle located in Mazandaran. When this region was conquered by the Mongols, both Terken Hatun and the harem of Alāeddīn Muḥammad came under the control of Genghis Khan.[87] Khwarezmshah Alāeddīn Muḥammad's pre-existing health conditions took a turn for the worst upon learning this and, nearing death, he entrusted the throne to his son Celâleddîn. He then passed away in December 1220.[88] Sultan Alāeddīn Muḥammad was a sovereign who possessed esteemed knowledge and culture, and who extended patronage to scholars.[89] He was recognized for his courage, benevolence, and aspirational disposition.[90]

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85 Cüveynî, *Cihângüşâ*, p.123-128; Reşîdeddîn, *Câmiü't-tevârih*, I, p.492-494; Aziz, *Khwarazmshahs*, p.83-84.

86 İbnü'l-Esîr, *el-Kâmil*, X, p.218-220; Cûzcânî, *Tabakât-ı Nâsırî*, II, 106-107; Cüveynî, *Cihângüşâ*, p.145-146; Reşîdeddîn, *Câmiü't-tevârih*, I, p.496-503; Alyârî, "Çengiz Han-ı Moğol", p.517-518; Mustafa Kafalı, "Cengiz Han", *DİA*, VII, 368; Azar Nasırabadı, *Diplomasi ve Elçilik Faaliyetleri*, p.186-187.

87 Nesevî, *Sîret*, p.58-59; Mîrhând, Ravzatu's-safa, IV, p.409; Ceceli, "Kadın'ın Yeri ve Önemi", p.510.

88 Nesevî, *Sîret*, p.70; Abdülkerim Özaydın, "Muhammed b. Tekiş", p.579; Bünyadov, *Enuşteginliler*, p.173.

89 İbnü'l-Esîr, *el-Kâmil*, X, p.223.

90 Cûzcânî, *Tabakât-ı Nâsırî*, I, p.306.

Khwarezmshah Celâleddîn (1220-1231)

The final monarch of the Khwārazmshāhs, Celâleddîn Khwārazmshāh, had actively engaged in state politics from his time as a prince and had acquired governance expertise from observing his father.[91] While his father Alāeddīn Muḥammad had entrusted the governance of Gūr, Herāt, Gorgistān, and Sīstān to Celâleddîn, he chose to not dispatch the prince to these territories, instead, he sent Kerbēr Malik to oversee those territories.[92] As is widely recognized, Alāeddīn Muḥammad, swayed by his mother Terken Hatun, designated Uzlakshah as his successor.[93] Nevertheless, not long prior to his death, the Sultan made a change to his designated heir and, in accordance with his testamentary wishes, mandated that Celâleddîn would ascend to the throne. He additionally implored his brothers Akshah and Uzlakshah, who were in attendance, to capitulate to Celâleddîn. Following the demise of Sultan Alāeddīn, Celâleddîn Hārezmshāh proceeded to Gurganj, a region that had not yet fallen under Mongolian occupation. Despite his designation as heir by his father, Celâleddîn faced ongoing allegiance to Uzlakshah among the military, while his brothers, Akshah and Uzlakshah, conspired to orchestrate his assassination. Nonetheless, prior to the execution of this plan, Celâleddîn relocated to Khorasan and reached Nesa, as the Mongol forces were advancing towards Hārezm. Subsequently, upon learning about the Mongols' activities in Transoxiana, Akshah and Uzlakshah also arrived in Khorasan.[94] During the struggle against the Mongols near Nishapur, the two princes unfortunately met their death.[95]

While these developments were unfolding, the Mongols took the capital Gurganj in May 1221 and carried out a huge massacre and destruction in the city.[96] Celâleddîn, located in Nishapur, promptly initiated endeavours to restructure the state. He dispatched communications to the beys and emirs, imploring them to unite with him in combating the Mongols and to assemble in his support. Upon learning of the Mongols' advancement, he initially sought refuge at the Kahire Fortress near Zavezan and subsequently proceeded to Ghazni. Following communication with his commanders, Celâleddîn mobilized an army comprising 60,000 soldiers and engaged the Mongol commanders Tekecük and Molghor, who were at

91 Cüveynî, *Cihângüşâ*, p.334-335.

92 Aydın Taneri, "Celâleddîn Hârezmşâh", *DİA*, VII, p.248.

93 Cüveynî, *Cihângüşâ*, p.337; Reşîdeddîn, *Câmiü't-tevârih*, I, p.510.

94 Nesevî, *Sîret*, p.85; Taneri, *Celâlüd'dîn*, p.21-22; Taneri, "Celâleddîn Hârezmşâh," p.248.

95 Cüveynî, *Cihângüşâ*, p.338.

96 Cüveynî, *Cihângüşâ*, p.146-149.



that time besieging the Velian Fortress, ultimately securing a victory over them. In reaction, Genghis Khan dispatched a military force led by Şiki Kutu Noyan to confront the Hārezmshāh. Nevertheless, this military force suffered a significant loss at Parvan.[97] Nonetheless, conflicts emerged among Celâleddîn commanders, leading to dissension among the soldiers regarding the allocation of spoils. Upon being informed of these developments, Genghis Khan mobilized a substantial army and pursued Celâleddîn, who sought to flee in the direction of India. Consequently, when the two factions encountered near the Indus River, the sultan's forces were encircled by the Mongols on November 25, 1221. Despite achieving notable victories against the Mongol forces in this engagement, was Celâleddîn ultimately vanquished and was compelled to flee by plunging into the Indus River, accompanied by several of his soldiers.[98] Observing Celâleddîn's valour in this conflict and noting his courage as he leapt into the Indus River, Genghis Khan conveyed his esteem by stating, "A father ought to have a son such as this.[99]

Celâleddîn, having sought refuge, arrived in India between 1222 and 1223. In that region, he effectively defeated and eliminated Rana Shatra, who confronted him with his troops, subsequently acquiring significant military resources. Subsequently, he established an alliance with Nasireddin Kabaca, a regional leader; however, this collaboration terminated due to particular behaviours demonstrated by Kabaca. Subsequently, Celâleddîn arrived within the territories governed by the Delhi Turk Sultan, Shamsi Melik Shamseddin Iltutmish. When Iltutmish initiated actions against Celâleddîn, his initial intention was retribution; however, he was later prompted by Shamseddin Iltutmish to pursue a peaceful resolution. Anticipating Celâleddîn's exit from the region, Iltutmish expressed this sentiment diplomatically by remarking, "The environmental circumstances present here are not favorable for an esteemed prince of your stature." Once he agreed to the terms of the peace proposal, Celâleddîn subsequently retreated.[100] Despite the sultan's endeavour to cultivate a familial bond through marriage to the daughter of Rai Kokar Sangin from the area, it was evident that his presence was not favorably received.[101] As Shamseddin Iltutmish and Nasireddin Kabaca, along with other local

97 Cüveynî, *Cihângüşâ*, p.339-340.

98 Nesevî, *Sîret*, p.110-111; Reşîdeddîn, *Câmiü't-tevârih*, I, p.526-527.

99 Cüveynî, *Cihângüşâ*, p.344; Reşîdeddîn, *Câmiü't-tevârih*, I, p.527; Taneri, *Celâlüd'dîn Hârezmşâh*, p.26; Bünyadov, *Enuşteginliler*, p.185-186.

100 Nesevî, *Sîret*, p.114-120.

101 Cüveynî, *Cihângüşâ*, p.346; Mîrhând, *Ravzatu's-safâ*, IV, p.424.

emirs, allied against Celâleddîn, he came to the conclusion that he could not stay longer in the region and decided to leave for Iraq-i Acem in 1224.[102]

Though the Sultan attempted to forge familial ties through seeking the hand of Rai Kokar Sangin's daughter, it was clear that he was unwelcome in this land.[103] He then advanced against his brother Giyâseddîn Pirşah and brought him under his control. In addition, all the emirs in Khorasan, Iraq-i Ajam, and Mazandaran acknowledged Celâleddîn's sovereignty.[104] After consolidating control over the Iranian territories, Celâleddîn Khwarezmshah proceeded towards Azerbaijan, capturing Maragha first and then Tabriz in 1225. Tabriz would become Celâleddîn's new capital city. Indeed, when Atabeg Özbek, the ruler of the city, heard of the sultan's arrival, he deserted the city and fled.[105]

Upon Jalal al-Din Khwarazmshah's arrival in Kirman, Barak Hajib proclaimed his loyalty to him. Subsequently, Jalal al-Din married the daughter of the Atabeg of Fars, thereby establishing familial relations between the two parties.[106] Following the capture of Tabriz, Celâleddîn Hârezmşâh initiated an advance towards Georgian territories in 1225. He communicated his requests to the Georgians; however, they declined to fulfil these demands. The Georgian army, which confronted Celâleddîn with a significant force, suffered a defeat, resulting in the capture of the city of Divin by the Hârezmshâhs. Nevertheless, upon becoming aware of the insurgency orchestrated by the governor of Tabriz and Şemseddîn Tuğrâî, Celâleddîn returned to impose retribution upon them.[107] Later, in 1226, he initiated another campaign against the Georgians, capturing Tbilisi and seizing substantial booty.[108] During this time, upon learning of Barak Hâcib's rebellion, Celâleddîn was compelled to return to Kirman. Nonetheless, during his return journey in August 1226, he laid siege to Ani and dispatched a portion of his forces to Kars; however, these endeavours proved to be ineffectual. Subsequently, in 1228, Celâleddîn engaged in renewed conflict with the Georgians, successfully overcoming their substantial

102 Nesevî, *Sîret*, p.120-122; Taneri, "Celâleddîn Hârezmşâh", p.249.

103 Cüveynî, *Cihângüşâ*, p.346; Mîrhând, *Ravzatu's-safâ*, IV, p.424.

104 Nesevî, *Sîret*, p.128-130; Cüveynî, *Cihângüşâ*, p.349-350; Aziz, *Kwarazmshahs*, p.124.

105 Nesevî, *Sîret,* p.140-141; İbnü'l-Esîr, *el-Kâmil*, X, p.284.

106 Nesevî, *Sîret*, p.140-141; İbnü'l-Esîr, *el-Kâmil*, X, p.284.

107 İbnü'l-Esîr*, el-Kâmil*, X, p.286-288; Ziya Bünyadov, *Azerbaycan Atabegleri Devleti*, Turkish trans. İlyas Kemaloğlu, Istanbul 2017, p.159-160.

108 Nesevî, *Sîret*, p.151; Cüveynî, *Cihângüşâ*, p.357-358.

army that included Armenians, Alans, Sabirs, Kipchaks, and Laz, thereby illustrating his dominance in the area.[109]

During the reign of Sultan Alâeddîn Muhammed, conflicts arose with the Abbasid Caliphate. However, by the onset of Celâleddîn's rule, the conditions had altered considerably. Certainly, the formidable Khwarezmshah State that prevailed during the reign of Alâeddîn Muhammed had disintegrated and was in the process of being restored by Celâleddîn Hârezmshâh. In 1224, under these circumstances, Celâleddîn traveled to Khuzestan, a region loyal to the caliph al-Nâṣir li-dīnillāh, where he remained throughout the winter, successfully engaging and defeating the forces of the caliph. Consequently, Celâleddîn dispatched an emissary to the caliph seeking aid; however, al-Nâṣir declined to provide assistance. In reaction, Celâleddîn laid siege to Tustar and subsequently endeavoured to seize Basra, albeit without success. Al-Nâṣir, in anticipation of military action against the sultan who had seized Dakuka and Bezavic near Baghdad, deployed his commander Kuş Timur to engage Celâleddîn; however, the suştan subsequently pursued this force as far as Baghdad.[110] While Celâleddîn was in Azerbaijan in 1225, caliph al-Nâṣir died and was succeeded by al-Zāhir bi-amrillāh. The new caliph sent an envoy to Celâleddîn with the intention of establishing friendly relations, and in return, the sultan also dispatched an envoy to him. Nonetheless, this era witnessed the demise of ez-Zahîr, with el-Mustansır billâh being declared the Abbasid caliph. During Celâleddîn's siege of Ahlat, the caliph dispatched an envoy with specific requirements, among which was the termination of the siege; however, Celâleddîn declined to comply with this request.[111]

When Celâleddîn Hârezmşâh reached Maragha in 1225, he had a letter sent to Sultan Alâeddîn Keykubad of the Anatolian Seljuks to form a partnership.[112] Through the visit of envoys, friendly relations were established between the two parties.[113] Following this, Celâleddîn laid siege to Ahlat but failed to capture it. His wish to capture the city stemmed from the booty that he had come into pos-

109 Cüveynî, *Cihângüşâ*, p.362-363; Özaydın, "Hârezmşahlar Devleti", p.894.

110 İbnü'l-Esîr, *el-Kâmil*, X, p.277-278; Cüveynî, *Cihângüşâ*, p.350-351; Taneri, *Celâlüd'dîn Hârezmşâh*, p.52-54; Taneri, "Celâleddîn Hârezmşâh", p.250.

111 Nesevî, *Sîret*, p.205-206; Taneri, *Celâlüd'dîn Hârezmşâh*, p.54-55; Azar Nasırabadı, *Diplomasi ve Elçilik Faaliyetleri*, p.98-104.

112 İbnü'l-Esîr, *el-Kâmil*, X, p.277-278; Cüveynî, *Cihângüşâ*, p.350-351; Taneri, *Celâlüd'dîn Hârezmşâh*, p.52-54; Taneri, "Celâleddîn Hârezmşâh", p.250.

113 Nesevî, *Sîret*, p.205-206; Taneri, *Celâlüd'dîn Hârezmşâh*, p.54-55; Azar Nasırabadı, *Diplomasi ve Elçilik Faaliyetleri*, p.98-104.

session, during his 1226 campaign against Georgia, being seized by Hâcib Ali, the deputy of Ahlat appointed by the Ayyubid Melik Eşref.[114] These and comparable actions of Celâleddîn prompted Sultan Alâeddîn to develop apprehensions about their partnership. While the Khwarezmshah acted as an intermediary between the Mongols and the Anatolian Seljuks, Celâleddîn's conduct in Eastern Anatolia resulted in increased tensions. In particular, Celâleddîn Hârezmşâh's second siege of Ahlat in March-April 1230, which culminated in the city's capture, represented a notable turning point in this context.[115]

Sultan Alâeddîn Keykubad dispatched an emissary to Celâleddîn, imploring him to relinquish the ambition of seizing Tiflis and conveying his dissatisfaction regarding the siege of Ahlat. Notwithstanding this, Celâleddin Harezmşah operated in accordance with his personal discretion. Once more, Sultan Alâeddîn urged him to negotiate a settlement with the Mongols; however, Celâleddîn similarly disregarded this counsel. Consequently, due to these developments, the Anatolian Seljuks and the Ayyubids established an alliance in opposition to Celâleddîn. After becoming aware of the advancement of Alâeddîn Keykubad and Melik Eşref alongside their forces, Celâleddîn initiated the mobilization of his army and commenced operations. The Battle of Yassıçemen, which occurred near Erzincan in 1230, culminated in a significant defeat for the Khwarezmshah, compelling Celâleddîn Hârezmşâh to retreat from the battlefield.[116] Celâleddîn suffered a huge defeat and headed towards Ganja but had lost his old strength. During this time, the Mongols were searching high and low for him. Ultimately, upon arriving near Amid in 1231, he was located by the Mongols, who initiated a raid before dawn. In this confrontation, Celâleddîn was compelled to retreat once more; a number of his soldiers perished, while others dispersed. The Sultan subsequently withdrew to the vicinity of Meyyafarikin, where he met his demise at the hands of the Kurds in 1231.[117] Consequently, with the demise of its final ruler, the Khwarezmian State disintegrated.

114 İbn Bîbî, *el-Evamirü'l-Ala'iyye fi'l-umuri'l-Ala'iyye*, I, Turkish trans. Mürsel Öztürk, Ankara 1996, p.374-375; Osman Turan, *Selçuklular Zamanında Türkiye*, 1993, p.364.

115 İbnü'l-Esîr, *el-Kâmil*, X, p.341; Cüveynî, *Cihângüşâ*, p.365-366.

116 İbn Bîbî, *el-Evamirü'l-Ala'iyye*, I, 382-385; İbnü'l-Esîr, *el-Kâmil*, X, 342-343; Cüveynî, *Cihângüşâ,* p.369-37 Taneri, *Celâlüd'dîn Hârezmşâh*, p.71-72; Turan, Selçuklular Zamanında Türkiye, p.371.

117 On the narrative about the death of Jalāl al-Dīn Khārezmshāh, see Nesevi, Sîret, p.274-276; İbnü'l-Esîr, *el-Kâmil*, X, p.351. Cüveynî, *Cihângüşâ*, p.376.

Certain Khwarezmians who persisted in Anatolia enlisted in the employment of the Seljuks of Rum, while others migrated towards Syria and the Jazira region.[118]

Sultan Celâleddîn Khwarezmshah was known as a brave and determined individual.[119] He respected the knowledgeable, exhibited considerable respect for scholars, and endorsed their endeavours through his patronage. Despite his earnest endeavours to rejuvenate his diminished status and institute a new realm of authority, he failed to regain his position following the Battle of Yassıçemen. His impact on the populace endured well beyond his demise, with numerous individuals remaining sceptical of his actual passing. Notably recognized for his opposition to the Mongol Empire, Celâleddîn Khwarezmshah has established his significance in Turkish history through his exceptional character and rigorous efforts.

State Administration

Although political achievements are vital to the advancement of states, institutions represent one of the most essential components of governance and stability. From this viewpoint, the appropriate and robust formation of both administrative and military entities, along with their effective operation, is essential for the advancement of a state. Undoubtedly, the Khwarezmshah participated in the regional administrative framework established by their predecessors—namely the Samanids, the Ghaznavids, and later the Seljuks. This system persisted throughout the reigns of Atsız and İlarslan; however, beginning with the era of Alâeddîn Tekiş, the state's indigenous institutions commenced their development.[120] These institutions, originally based on the Seljuk State model, progressively evolved to fulfill the unique requirements of the Khwarezmshah.

During the Khwarezmian period, the titles and honorifics employed by the rulers, along with court etiquette, perpetuated the traditions established during the Seljuk era. Initially, more moderate titles such as Khwārazmshāh and malik were employed; however, subsequently, terms like sultan and sultanü'l-ʿazām

118 İbnü'l-Esîr, *el-Kâmil*, X, p.351.

119 Cûzcânî, *Tabakât-ı Nâsırî*, I, p.315; For detailed information on the personality traits and leadership of Jalāl al-Dīn Khārezmshāh, see. Hasan Geyiklioğlu, "Hârezmşah Celâleddîn Mengüberti'nin Şahsiyeti", *Türk Kültürü*, XXXIV, S.396 (1996), p.229-238; Gülseren Ceceli Dursun, "Tarihin Dönüm Noktasında Bir Türk Lider: Celâleddîn Hârezmşâh (617-628/1220-1231)", *Türk Tarihinde Liderler*, ed. Okan Yeşilot vd., İstanbul 2019, p.285-296.

120 For detailed information on the state organisation of the Khārezmshāh period, see Meryem Gürbüz, *Hârizmşahlar Devlet Teşkilatı, Ekonomi, Kültür,* Istanbul 2014.

became dominant. Following his triumph over the Kara-Khitans, Sultan Alāʾ al-Dīn Muḥammad was conferred the honorific "Sencer." A band and musical ensemble within the palace performed the nevbet (a ceremonial announcement) five times each day, which was then reiterated three times by princes and emirs. The emblems of sovereignty, including flags, umbrellas, and ceremonial attire, continued to exhibit the predilection for the color black observed among the Seljuks. Palace officials encompassed roles such as ḥācib-i ḥāṣṣ, ṭāṣhtdār, jamdār, amīr-i ʿālam, amīr-i ʿaḥūr, amīr-i shikār, and chāshnīgīr. Princes were designated to roles early in life to acquire administrative expertise.[121] While a system of succession was in place, it lacked explicit codification; for instance, Khwārazmshāh Il-Arslan designated Sultan Shah Mahmud[122] as his successor in lieu of his eldest son Tekish, and Alāʾ al-Dīn Muḥammad initially nominated Uzlaqshah as his heir in preference to Jalal ad-Din, only to alter this decision towards the conclusion of his life.[123] The issue of succession frequently led to disputes among princes, which negatively impacted the governance and political relations of the state.

The state demonstrated a more centralized organizational framework during the tenures of Alāʾ al-Dīn Tekish and Alāʾ al-Dīn Muḥammad. However, with the commencement of Tekish's period, the Kangly-Kipchak leaders started to gather influence within the state's administrative structure. The most important reason behind this was that Terken Hatun, Tekish's wife and the mother of Alāʾ al-Dīn Muḥammad, was of Kangly-Kipchak origin, and these Turks played an instrumental part in structuring the army. The incorporation of these elements within the Khwārazmshāh state, coupled with the augmented authority of Terken Hatun during the reign of Alāʾ al-Dīn Muḥammad, led to their significant impact on governance. These set of circumstances were primarily responsible for the ultimate demise of state authority.[124] In the military structure, in addition to the Kangly-Kipchak components, there were also units such as the elite army (ḥassa army), contingents from subsidiary administrations, and forces associated with members of the dynasty. The iqṭāʿ system was similarly instituted under the Khwarezmshah, with land grants being conferred upon emirs, commanders, and military governors.[125]

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121 Köprülü, "Hârizmşâhlar", p.277-278.

122 Cüveynî, Cihângüşâ, p.258.

123 Nesevî, Sîret, p.85; Cüveynî, *Cihângüşâ*, p.337; Reşîdeddîn, *Câmiü't-tevârih*, I, p.510.

124 Köprülü, "Hârizmşâhlar", p.278.

125 Köprülü, "Hârizmşâhlar", p.280-281; Gürbüz, *Hârizmşahlar Devlet Teşkilatı*, p.199-203.

During the Khwārazmshāh period, the vizier constituted the highest authority after the sultan in matters of state, possessing the seal of the vizierate and directing the administration. The principal responsibility of the vizier was to chair the Grand Council, Divan-ı A'lâ, where governmental issues were deliberated and decisions were rendered. The vizier held the authority to appoint and remove state officials and judges, allocate and supervise the iqṭāʿ lands, and execute specific economic policies.[126] Among the influential elite councils were the Divan-ı İşraf, Divan-ı Arz, Divan-ı Istifa, Divan-ı İnşa, Divan-ı Hass, and Divan-ı A'lâ.[127] The financial matters of the state were overseen by the Divan-ı Istifa. Revenues for the Khwarezmshah treasury consisted of taxes levied on the population, war spoils, commercial earnings, and taxes from subordinate provinces. Taxes were administered by officials known as Âmils, characterized by predetermined types and amounts, with a zero-tolerance policy for any irregularities. In instances of professional misconduct, penalties were administered.[128]

The basis of the judicial system, similarly to that in other Turkic-Islamic states, was grounded in customary (urf) and Sharia law. Judges (qāḍīs) adjudicated disputes that emerged within society, with the chief judge (qāḍī al-quḍāt) serving as the highest authority in this capacity. This role was conferred significant importance during the Khwarezmshah period. Judges and the qāḍī al-quḍāt, who significantly contributed to the administration of justice, also held considerable influence in the issuance of fatwas on diverse subjects. Several documents from the Khwarezmshah period suggest that judges were tasked not only with legal duties but also wielded considerable influence in the governance of madrasas and the administration of waqfs.[129] Customary law (urf) was primarily used to resolve traditional and customary issues. During this time, significant attention was devoted to the institution of justice, and no deficiencies or oversights were permitted in this context.

126 Aydın Taneri, "Selçuklu-Osmanlı Çizgisinde Hârezmşahlar Vezareti", *Tarih Enstitüsü Dergisi*, S.7-8 (1976-1977), p.24-25.

127 See also on Divans, Gürbüz, *Hârizmşahlar Devlet Teşkilatı*, p.96-123.

128 For detailed information on the effect of political relations on the taxes levied in this period, see Gülseren Azar Nasırabadı, "Hârezmşâhlar Döneminde Siyasi İlişkilerin Hazine Gelirlerine Tesiri", *Tarih Okulu Dergisi*, LI (Nisan 2021), p.831-853.

129 For detailed information on the duties, powers and responsibilities of the qadi during the reign of the Khārezmshāhs, please see Gülseren Azar Nasırabadı, "Hârezmşâhlar Dönemindeki Dinî Uygulamaların Tarihi Örneklerle Değerlendirilmesi", *Şarkiyat*, XII/1 (Nisan 2021), p.95-98.

Scientific and Cultural Life

The states that existed prior to the Khwarezmshah dynasty in the regions where the Khwarezmshah State developed and grew had established the groundwork for scientific advancement in the area. Constructed upon the foundations established by the Seljuk State, the Khwarezmshah enhanced not only the political and administrative structures but also the scientific and cultural institutions of the state to a more advanced level.[130] Undoubtedly, the scholars of the Khwarezmshah period received their education from the scholars of the preceding Seljuk era. Although the educational institutions of that period persisted in their operations throughout the Khwarezmshah era, new infrastructures were developed as required. In fact, the Khwarezmshah ordered the construction of numerous madrasas in regions including Khwarezm, Khorasan, Zaveh, Isfahan, and Qazvin.[131] The capital, Gurganj, became an influential centre of science and culture during this period.[132]

During the Khwarezmshah period, many scholars emerged in religious and rational sciences. One of the greatest scholars of this era was Zamakhshari (d. 1144),[133] who was an expert in exegesis, hadith, and grammar and had trained many students. His most famous work is the exegesis entitled al-Kashshaf,[134] which was widely accepted in the Islamic world and influenced many people. Bakkali (d. 1167), an esteemed scholar in the fields of exegesis and grammar and a disciple of Zamakhshari, was distinguished by the epithet Zayn al-Mashayikh (Adornment of the Teachers). His most significant contribution is *Tafsir al-Bakkali*, which examines the discipline of tafsir (Qur'anic exegesis).[135] Ebu'l-Feth Muhammad

130 For detailed information on the life of science during the Khārezmshāh period, see Gülseren Azar Nasırabadı, *Hârezmşâhlar Devleti'nde İlmî Hayat*, Ankara 2023.

131 For information about the madrasa built in this period, see İbnü'l-Esîr, *el-Kâmil*, X, 38; Hamdullah Müstevfî Kazvînî, *Târih-i Güzîde*, Tahran 1387hş, p.813-814; Hüseyin Sultanzâde, *Târih-i Medâris-i İrân*, [date unknown], [date of publication unknown], p.133; Nurullah Kisâî, *Medâris-i Nizâmiyye ve Tesirât-ı İlmî ve İctimâi-yi an*, Tahran, 1374hş, p.251. Naci Maruf, *Ulemâü'n-nizamiyyat ve medarisü'l-meşriki'l-İslâmî*, Bağdat 1973, p.104. Shelia S.Blair, "The Madrasa at Zuzan: Islamic Architecture in Eastern Iran on the Eve of the Mongol Invasions", *Muqarnas*, vol.3 (1985), p.7576; Kafesoğlu, *Hârezmşâhlar*, p.284; Azar Nasırabadı, *İlmî Hayat*, p.55-62.

132 Özaydın, "Hârizm", p.218.

133 İbn Hallikân, Vefeyâtü'l-a'yân, V, Beyrut 1969-1971, p.168; Mustafa Öztürk-Mehmet Suat Mertoğlu, "Zemahşerî", *DİA*, XLIV, p.235.

134 Ali Özek, "el-Keşşâf", *DİA*, XXV, p.329.

135 Tayyar Altıkulaç, "Bakkālî", *DİA*, IV, p.544.



al-Shahrastani (d. 1153)[136] is well-known for his works Nihayat al-Iqdām fī ʿIlm al-Kalām and al-Milal wa al-Niḥal. Another one of the most prominent scholars of the Khwarezmshah period was Fakhr al-Din al-Razi (d. 1210), who was an expert in theology, exegesis, jurisprudence, and mysticism. This renowned scholar also authored works in various areas such as astronomy, medicine, and mathematics.[137] Al-Razi's most important work in the field of exegesis is *Mafātīḥ al-ghayb*. His theories have been transmitted from generation to generation through his writings and students, and his views on theology have been debated for centuries.[138]

In this era, various scholars also emerged in fields such as astronomy, mathematics, and medicine. One of the prominent astronomy scholars of the Khwarezmshah era was Jaghmini (d. 1221), who was known by the nickname "Alā' al-Munajjim." He authored an important work in astronomy titled *al-Mulahhas fī al-Hay'a*.[139] Also, during this period, Sharaf al-Dīn al-Tūsī (d. 12th century) wrote al-Muʿādalāt on algebra and *Risālah fī al-ʿUsturlāb al-Khaṭṭī* on astronomy.[140] Sharaf al-Dīn al-Tūsī is also credited with discovering the linear astrolabe, known as "Asā-yī Tūsī."[141] This astrolabe is regarded as a significant invention in the history of mathematics.[142] He also conducted studies on cubic equations and laid the foundations of analytic geometry.[143] Another notable figure in astronomy and astrology during this era was Bībī Munajjimah, a woman who provided Jalal al-Din Khwarezmshah and with news of latest developments in the field.[144]

Another prominent medical scholar of the time was Zayn al-Dīn al-Jurjānī (d. 1137). His most famous work is *Zāhirah al-Khārazmshāhī*, which contains

136 Ömer Faruk Harman, "Şehristânî", *DİA*, XXXVIII, p.467.

137 J.H. Kramers, "Râzî", *İA*, IX, p.646; Yusuf Şevki Yavuz, "Fahreddîn er-Râzî", *DİA*, XII, p.89.

138 Eşref Altaş, "Fahreddîn er-Râzî'nin Hayatı, Hâmileri, İlmî ve Siyasî İlişkileri", *İslâm Düşüncesinin Dönüşüm Çağında Fahreddîn er-Râzî*, ed. Ömer Türker-Osman Demir, İstanbul 2013, p.41.

139 Sadettin Ökten, "Çağmînî", *DİA*, VIII, p.182.

140 Ahmet Özel, "Tûsî, Şerefeddîn", *DİA*, XLI, p.445-446.

141 Özel, "Tûsî, Şerefeddîn", p.446.

142 Fuat Sezgin, *İslâm'da Bilim ve Teknik*, II, çev. Abdurrahman Aliy, Ankara 2007, p.134-135.

143 Özel, "Tûsî, Şerefeddîn", p.445-446.

144 İbn Bîbî, el-Evamirü'l-Ala'iyye, I, p.439.

approximately 450,000 words.[145] In addition to very important information on medicine, the work also contains various visual depictions of the skeletal, muscular, venous and arterial systems.[146] Doctor Bereketî (d. ca. XIII. century) who trained in this period,[147] and Najîbeddîn al-Samarkandî (d. 1222-23) were also important scholars in the field of medicine.[148] During the Khwarezmian period, many individuals seeking Islamic knowledge came to this region and studied under the renowned scholars of the time. Some of the scholars and students from these areas also travelled to other centres of learning such as Baghdad, Basra, and Damascus.

During the Khwarezmian period, cultural life was as rich as scholarly activity. The Khwarezmian rulers themselves were educated and cultured individuals who patronized scholars, writers, and poets.[149] The languages of science and culture at the time were Arabic and Persian. However, the influence of the Kangly-Kipchak Turks in the army and administration during the Khwarezmian era also ensured the prominence of the Kangly-Kipchak Turkish language. The most important work written in the Kangly language was *Tıbyân lügati't-Türkî ala lisanü'l-Kanglî,* a Kangly-Persian dictionary authored by Muhammad b. Kays. This work was presented to Sultan Jalal al-Din Khwarezmshah but, unfortunately, has not survived to the present day.[150]

One of the notable literary figures and poets of the period was Rashid al-Din Vatvat (d. 1177). Serving under the Khwarezmshah, Vatvat held the important position of munshī (secretary) within the state. One of his most famous works is Hadāiku's-sihr fī dekāiki'š-šir, which deals with rhetoric. Besides this, he authored many works, among which the collections of state correspondence, letters, and qasidas titled *Ebkāru'l-afkār fi'r-resā'il wa'l-ash'ār and Arā'isu'l-hawātir wa nafā'isu'n-nevādir* are the most renowned.[151] Similarly, Zemahshari's works

[145] Ramazan Şeşen, "Ortaçağ İslâm Tıbbının Kaynakları ve XV. Yüzyılda Türkçe'ye Tercüme edilen Tıp Kitapları", *Tıp Tarihi Araştırmaları*, 5 (1993), p.14. Şeşen, "Ortaçağ İslâm Tıbbının Kaynakları", 18. Hasan Doğruyol, "Cürcânî", *DİA*, VIII, p.133.

[146] Doğruyol, "Cürcânî", p.133-134.

[147] Şeşen, "Ortaçağ İslâm Tıbbının Kaynakları", p.14.

[148] Mahmut Kaya, "Necîbüddin es-Semerkandî", *DİA*, XXXII, p.490.

[149] İbnü'l-Esîr, el-Kâmil, IX, 160; Kafesoğlu, *Hârezmşahlar*, p.55; Özaydın, "Hârezmşahlar Devleti", p.885.

[150] Köprülü, "Hârizmşâhlar", p.289.

[151] Derya Örs, "Vatvât, Reşîdüddin", *DİA*, XLII, p.573.

on the Arabic language and grammar, *Mukaddimat al-adab and al-Mufassal*, are highly significant.[152] He wrote and dedicated his work *Mukaddimat al-adab* to Khwarezmshah Atsiz at his request for the magnificent palace library.[153] Another significant scholar in grammar, language, and literature was Mutarrizi (d. 1231).[154] Undoubtedly one of the most famous Arabic language scholars of the Khwarezmshah period was Sekkaki, whose well-known work is *Miftah al-'ulum*.[155] Sekkaki brought a different perspective to the science of rhetoric; unlike before, when rhetoric was considered only as a literary art, he approached it through theology, philosophy, and logic and sought to interpret it in this way.[156]

The Khwarezmshah and the Khwarezm region hold great importance in the history of Turkish Sufism. This is due to the many mystics who were trained in these lands and whose Sufi views have continued to influence the Islamic world to the present day. Undoubtedly, the greatest mystic raised in this geography was Najm al-Din Kubra (d. 1221), the founder of the Kubrawiyya order. The sheikh, who was very famous during his lifetime, had numerous disciples not only in Khwarezm but across a much wider region. Moreover, his students spread his Sufi teachings throughout the Islamic world, making the Kubrawiyya an important Sufi path. Over time, new Sufi perspectives emerged from it, and it continued its existence within the Islamic world.[157]

Among the disciples and representatives trained by Necmeddīn-i Kübrā, the most famous are Mecdeddīn al-Bağdādī, Necmeddīn-i Dāye, Radıyeddīn Ali Lala, Saʿdeddīn-i Hammūye, Cemāleddīn-i Jīlī, Baba Kemāl-i Jendī, and Seyfeddīn-i Bāharzī. The Kübrāwī silsila that has continued to this day descends from Radıyeddīn Ali Lala.[158] Another representative, Seyfeddīn Bāharzī, also made significant efforts in spreading the Kübrāwī order in Mawarannahr. Additionally, Bāharzī's children were also influential in spreading his teachings to

152 Nuri Yüce, "Mukaddimetü'l-edeb", *DİA*, XXXI, p.120; Mehmet Sami Benli, "el-Mufassal", *DİA*, XXX, p.368.

153 Nuri Yüce, *Mukaddimetü'l-Edeb Hvarizm Türkçesi ile Tercümeli Şuşter Nüshası Giriş, Dil Özellikleri, Metin, İndeks*, Ankara 1988, p.7-8.

154 Yâkūt el-Hamevî, *Mu'cemü'l-üdebâ'*, VII, Beyrut 1999, p.158; M. Sadi Çöğenli, "Mutarrizî", *DİA*, XXXI, p.376.

155 Mehmet Sami Benli, "Miftâhu'l-ulûm", *DİA*, XXX, p.20-21.

156 İsmail, Durmuş, "Sekkâkî, Ebû Ya'kūb", *DİA*, XXXVI, p.333.

157 Süleyman Gökbulut, *Necmeddîn-i Kübrâ Hayatı, Eserleri, Görüşleri*, Istanbul 2010, p.134.

158 Gökbulut, *Necmeddîn-i Kübrâ*, p.134.

the Kirmān region.[159] Bāharzī also played a role in the Mongols' acceptance of Islam.[160] Indeed, Seyfeddīn Bāharzī was influential in the conversion of Berke Khan, the ruler of the Golden Horde, to Islam.[161] Likewise, Sadreddīn, the son of Sa'deddīn Hammūye, one of Necmeddīn-i Kübrā's disciples, had an impact on Gazan Khan, the ruler of the Ilkhanate, in his acceptance of Islam.[162]

The figure who played a pivotal role in the development of the Kubrawiyya order and particularly in its dissemination throughout Anatolia was Najm al-Dīn al-Dāya.[163] Another renowned Sufi who arrived in the Anatolian region during this period was Bahāʾ al-Dīn Walad. Having come from the Khwārazmshāh territories, he made significant contributions to the region.[164] Bahāʾ al-Dīn Walad's arrival in Anatolia also paved the way for the activities of the distinguished Sufi figure, Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī. One of the influential individuals in Rūmī's spiritual development was undoubtedly Farīd al-Dīn ʿAṭṭār of Nīshāpūr, a prominent Sufi and scholar of the time. The Sufi legacy of the Khwārazmshāh era played a crucial role in the emergence and development of Rūmī's mystical views, and in his later recognition as a world-renowned Sufi. Indeed, drawing upon this spiritual heritage, he introduced new perspectives, thus contributing to the formation of the Mevlevi order. In general, the teachings of the Kubrawiyya and the mystical thought of the Khwārazmshāh period had a significant influence on the establishment of many new Sufi orders in Anatolia.

The Mongol invasion not only led to the collapse of the Khwārazmshāh state but also had a profoundly negative impact on the intellectual and cultural life of the region. Primarily, the invasion inflicted severe damage on educational institutions. Madrasas, mosques, and libraries that provided education during this period suffered extensive destruction during the Mongol onslaught and became unusable. Moreover, along with the general populace, a significant number of

159 Süleyman Uludağ, "Yahyâ b. Ahmed el-Bâharzî", *DİA*, XLIII, p.240.

160 Süleyman Uludağ, "Bâharzî, Seyfeddîn", *DİA*, IV, p.474-475.

161 Uludağ, "Bâharzî, Seyfeddîn", p.475.

162 Osman Gazi Özgüdenli, *Gâzân Han ve Reformları (1295-1304)*, Istanbul 2009, p.94-97; For detailed information on the influence of the scholars of the Khārezmshāh period, see Azar Nasırabadı, *İlmî Hayat*, p.246-266; a.mlf, "Hârezmşâhlar Döneminde Âlimlerin Devlet İçerisindeki Faaliyetleri ve Sultanlar ile Münasebetleri", *Kültür Tarihi ve Disiplinlerarası Sanat/Tasarım* I, ed. Prof. Dr. Sibel Kılıç, Istanbul 2021, p.102-103.

163 Gökbulut, Necmeddîn-i Kübrâ, p.152.

164 Devletşah, *Devletşah Tezkiresi*, II, trans. Necati Lugal, Istanbul 1977, p.249.



scholars were among those who lost their lives. This situation delivered a serious blow to the intellectual and cultural life of the era. Among the most renowned figures who fought against the Mongols and lost their lives was the scholar and Sufi Shaykh Najm al-Dīn al-Kubrā. When Genghis Khan was about to capture Gurgānj, he reportedly sent word to Najm al-Dīn al-Kubrā, urging him to leave the city. However, he refused and chose instead to stay and resist the Mongols alongside the people of the city, ultimately losing his life in the struggle.[165] The Mongol invasion affected not only Khwārazm but also Transoxiana and Khurāsān, devastating many prominent centres of knowledge and art such as Bukhara, Samarqand, Merv, and Nīshāpūr. During this period, not only the general population but also scholars fled the Mongol invasion, relocating to various parts of the Islamic world where they continued their scholarly activities. In doing so, they helped carry the intellectual and cultural legacy of the Khwārazmshāh period to new regions, thereby contributing to the advancement of knowledge in those areas.

165 Cüveynî, *Cihângüşâ*, p.146; Azar Nasırabadı, *İlmî Hayat*, p.312.

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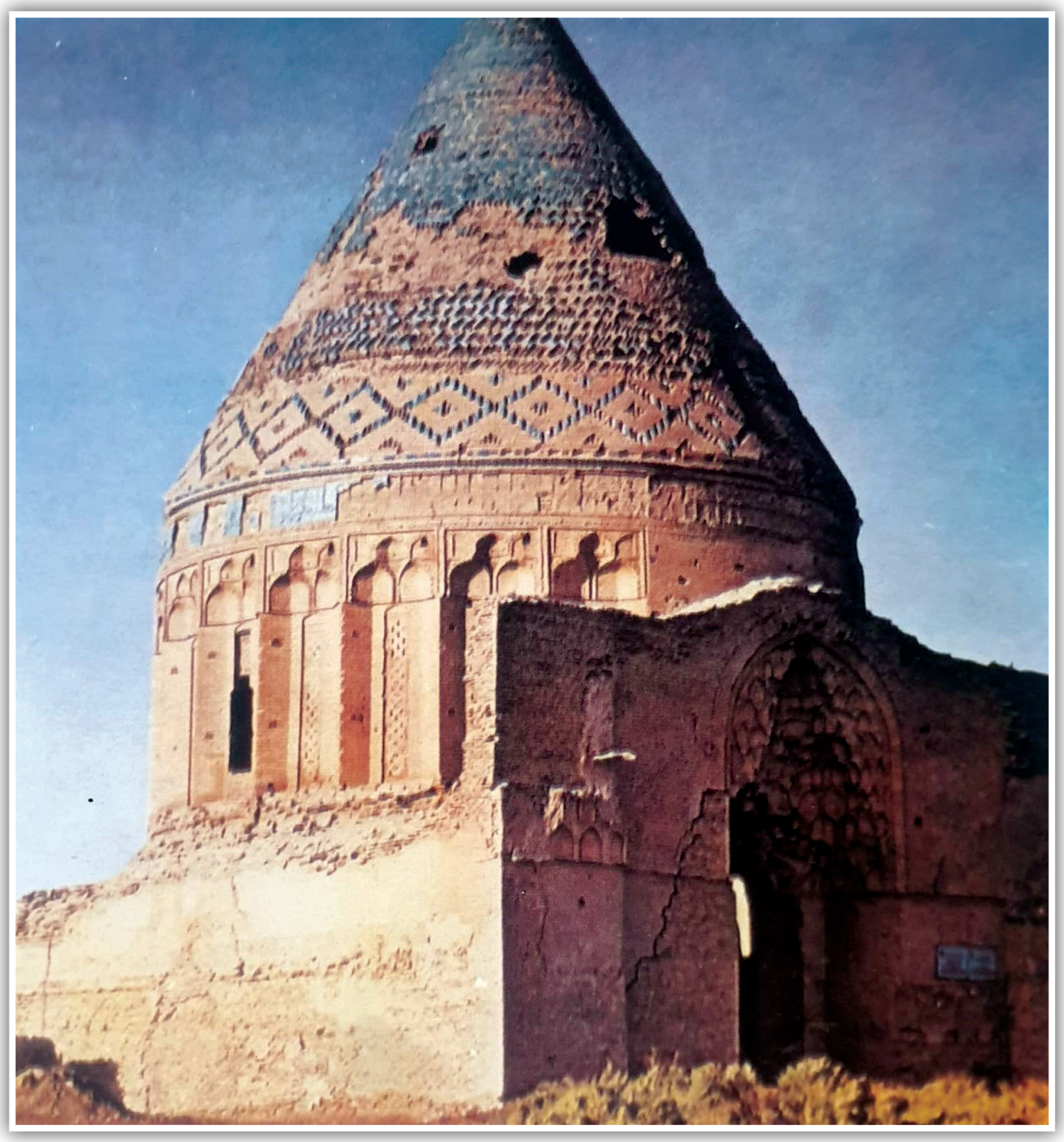
APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Necmeddîn-i Kübra Tomb



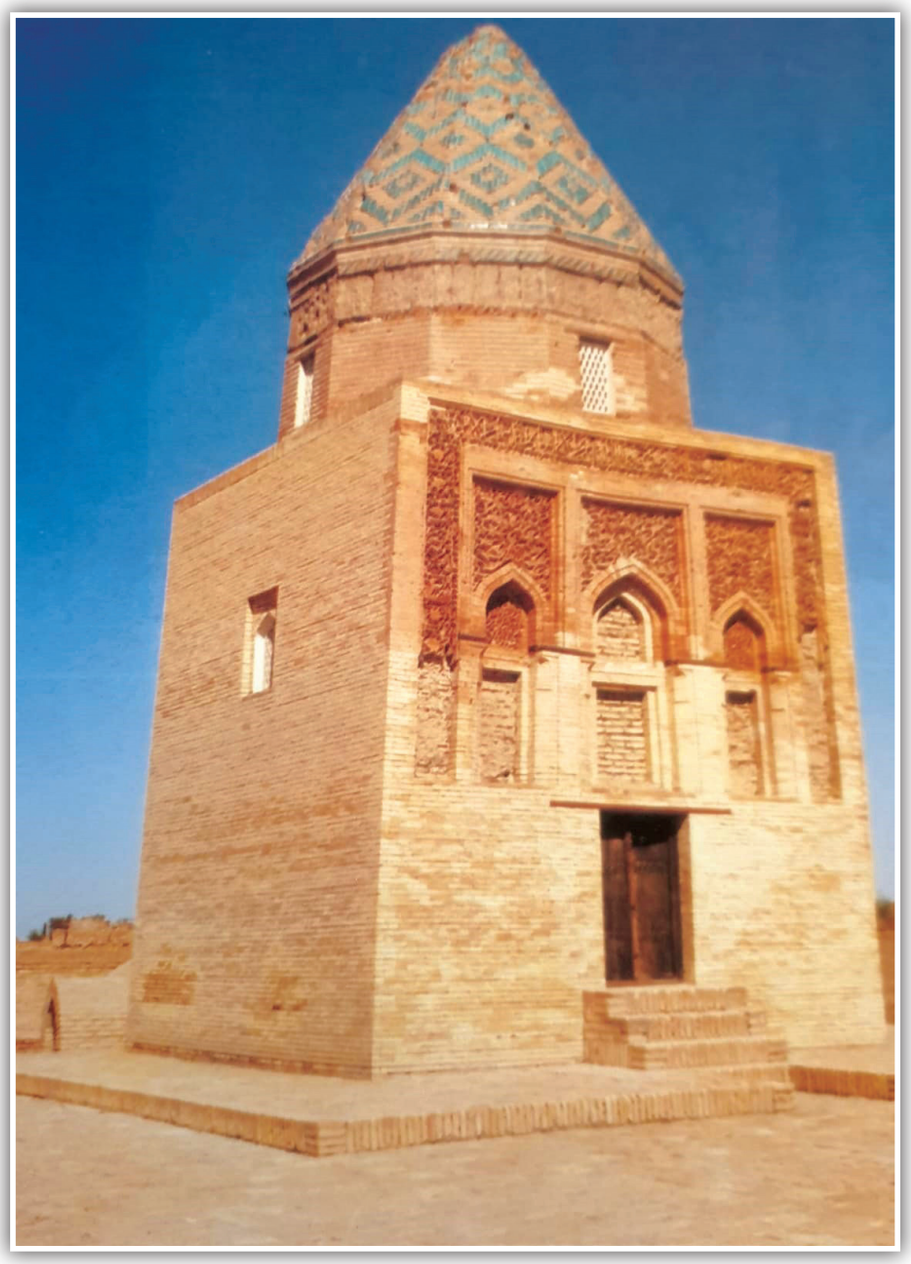
Source: Yüksel Sayan, *Türkmenistan'daki Mimari Eserler XI-XVI. Yüzyıl*, Ankara 1999.

Appendix 2: Alaeddîn Tekiş Tomb



Source: Yüksel Sayan, *Türkmenistan'daki Mimari Eserler XI-XVI. Yüzyıl*, Ankara 1999.

Appendix 3: Fahreddîn-i Râzî Tomb



Source: Yüksel Sayan, *Türkmenistan'daki Mimari Eserler XI-XVI. Yüzyıl*, Ankara 1999.

The Golden Horde State



Source: Atilla Karataş Collection

THE GOLDEN HORDE STATE

(1242-1502)

İlyas KEMALOĞLU*

The Turks, who appeared on the historical landscape during an early epoch, founded more than a hundred states across an extensive region that extended from Ötüken to Europe and from Siberia to the Middle East at various intervals. One example of such a state was the Golden Horde, which exerted its dominance over the Eurasian region for approximately two centuries throughout the Middle Ages. The Golden Horde was one of the most formidable states of its era; it conducted successful military campaigns against the Byzantine Empire, maintained dominion over the Russian principalities for two and a half centuries, issued coinage in the Balkans in the name of the Golden Horde emirs, and cultivated diverse partnerships with both the Mamluks of Egypt and the Ottoman Empire. The population of the Golden Horde was predominantly composed of diverse Turkic groups, notably the Kipchaks and Volga Bulgars, and by the early fourteenth century, Islam was established as the state'san official religion.

A defining feature of the Golden Horde is its unprecedented success in unifying a considerable segment of the Turkic populations under a singular political structure, marking the first such achievement since the era of the Göktürks. For

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this reason, the Golden Horde holds a special place as a shared historical legacy and hub of the Turks living today along the Volga River, in Siberia, the Caucasus, and Central Asia. This very phenomenon resulted in a ban on the exploration of Golden Horde history throughout the Soviet period. The formal acceptance of Islam within the Golden Horde extended the geographical limits of the Islamic realm to the north, while the Volga region emerged as a significant hub for Turkic and Islamic culture. The depiction of the Golden Horde as one of the sixteen stars on the Presidential Seal of the Republic of Türkiye underscores its significant position in both Turkic and global history.

The Foundation, Name and Population of The Golden Horde State

The military campaigns initiated by Temüjin, born in 1155, with the aim of uniting the Mongol tribes under his leadership, culminated in the establishment of the Great Mongol Empire in 1206. It was at this time that Temüjin assumed the title of "Genghis Khan," and the activities of Genghis Khan and his sons soon extended into neighboring regions. Following the unification of the Mongol tribes, the territories of the Kyrgyz and the Uighurs—followed later by those of the Khwarazmian Empire—were incorporated into this newly founded empire. Due to several factors—including the fact that a significant portion of the empire's population consisted of Turks, Genghis Khan's adoption of the Turkish model of governance for his empire, the appointment of Uighur Turks to key administrative positions, and the Mongols' adoption of the Uighur script—the empire of Genghis Khan is widely recognized as a Turco-Mongol state.

The borders of the Mongol Empire expanded so rapidly that, before his death in 1227, Genghis Khan divided the conquered territories among his sons in accordance with Mongol traditions. This practice led to the emergence of the Jochid and Chagatai uluses, followed later by the Ilkhanid ulus, within the ever-expanding lands of the Great Mongol Empire. On one hand, Genghis Khan's division helped prevent potential power struggles in Karakorum; on the other hand, it undoubtedly facilitated the administration of such vast territories. However, this partitioning also contributed to the fragmentation of the empire and, in time, enabled the uluses established within its borders to gain their independence. The formal emergence of the Golden Horde and its autonomy from the Great Mongol Empire must be comprehended within this framework. Genghis Khan conferred upon his



eldest son, Jochi (d. 1227), an expansive region extending from the Altai Mountains and Western Siberia to the Volga-Ural area, further bestowing upon him the authority to subjugate "all the territories in the West where Mongol horses could tread".[1] Thus, the foundations of the Jochid Ulus were laid in this region, known as the Dasht-i Qipchaq.

Subsequent to the Khwarazmian campaign, Jochi did not return to Karakorum and passed away roughly six months prior to his father, Genghis Khan, in 1227. When Jochi's sons, Batu and Orda Ichen, were unable to reach a consensus regarding succession—each relinquishing their claim in favor of the other—they presented the issue to their grandfather, Genghis Khan. The reciprocal abjuration motivated by mutual respect profoundly influenced Genghis Khan. In consultation with his nobility, he assigned, in accordance with the Yassa (Law of Genghis Khan), the On (Right) Wing and the regions adjacent to the Volga River to Sayin Khan, while the Sol (Left) Wing and the territories along the Syr Darya River were allocated to Orda Ichen.[2] Genghis Khan also ordered the establishment of three orda (court camps) for them: the "gold-threshold orda" for Batu, the "silver-threshold blue orda" for Ichen, and the "steel-threshold gray orda" for Shiban.[3] Consequently, after the demise of Jochi, his territories were allocated by Genghis Khan among his sons, resulting in a more explicit delineation of territorial boundaries. Consequently, Eastern Dasht-i Qipchaq was assigned to Orda Ichen (the left wing), whereas the Volga region and the previously captured Western Dasht-i Qipchaq (the right wing) were conferred to Batu Khan. Mustafa Kafalı contends that this division did not lead to the formation of two distinct khanates; instead, the Jochid Ulus was structured into a dual administration, reflecting the traditional right-left delineation of authority characteristic of Turkic state traditions.[4]

Genghis Khan's approach to resolving the succession dilemma resulted in the fragmentation of the Jochid Ulus—still in its embryonic phase—into distinct ordas among the progeny of Genghis. Consequently, Batu's domains were designated as the White Orda (Ak Orda), whereas those of Orda Ichen were known

1 Cuveynî, *Tarih-i Cihângüşâ*, trans. M. Öztürk, T.C. Kültür Bakanlığı Publications, Ankara 1998, p.96.

2 Ötemiş Hacı, *Çengiz-Nâme*, İ. Kemaloğlu, 5th ed. TTK Publications, Ankara 2024, pp.35-36.

3 Ötemiş Hacı, *Çengiz-Nâme*, p.32.

4 M. Kafalı, *Altın Orda Hanlığının Kuruluş ve Yükseliş Devirleri*, Istanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Publications, Istanbul 1976, p.19.

as the Blue Orda (Gök Orda). It is also recognized that additional descendants of Genghis, along with the beys of the Kiyat, Kongirat, Sejeut, Mangqut, and various other clans, received appanages within the Jochid Ulus.

Conversely, the issue of the territorial classification of the White Orda and the Blue Orda was a matter of contention for an extended period. Certain historians recognized the eastern region as the "White Orda" and the western area as the "Blue Orda." Nonetheless, this perspective is inaccurate. Indeed, the Russians—who had been subject to the rule of the Golden Horde for centuries—designated the western regions as the "Great Orda" and the eastern regions as the "Blue Orda." There is no doubt that the Russians inherited this terminology from the Tatar people. Furthermore, an accurate conclusion can be derived from the symbolism of colors, as the color blue is conventionally linked to the "east."[5] Furthermore, examining the comparative worth of metals provides additional insights into the importance of these colors. Consequently, the hues "gold" and "white" are deemed to possess a higher value than "silver" and "blue." This method of connecting the name of cardinal directions with colors is in keeping with tradition, as the Turks designated the west with the color "white" (ak) and the east with "blue" (gök).[6] As a result, the territories awarded to Jochi subsequent to the Khwarazmian campaign were apportioned among his sons by Genghis Khan after Jochi's demise, with Batu being designated as his father's successor.

The formal constitution of the Jochid Ulus and the delineation of its final boundaries occurred under the leadership of Batu, the son of Jochi (1227–1255). Under his guidance, the Second Kipchak Campaign (1235–1242) culminated in the total subjugation of the Desht-i Kipchak and the Idil Bulgar State, while the Russian principalities were brought under control between 1237 and 1240. Subsequently, territories that align with modern-day Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Serbia, and Bulgaria were aimed at.[7] Nevertheless, in 1242, Batu was obliged to conclude the campaign. Although the principal factor was undoubtedly the demise of Ögedei Khan in the capital Karakorum, it was also practically infeasible to prolong the campaign beyond that point. Following a seven-year campaign,

5 G. Vernadskiy, *Mongolı i Rus*, İzdatelstvo Agraf, Moskva 2001, p.145.

6 A. Gabain, "Renklerin Sembolik Anlamları", trans. S. Tezcan, *TD,* III/1 (Ankara 1968), pp.108- 109; İ. Kamalov, "Altın Orda Devleti'nin Adı Üzerine", *TDA*, 141 (Istanbul 2002), pp.117- 118.

7 For the campaigns of Batu Khan, see. İ. Kemaloğlu, *Altın Orda ve Rusya. Rusya Üzerindeki Türk-Ta tar Etkisi*, 3rd ed. Ötüken Publications, Istanbul 2022, pp.68-71.

the soldiers experienced exhaustion, and the logistical challenges associated with transporting the obtained spoils had become significant. For all these aforementioned reasons, the Mongols retreated from European territories. While other descendants of Genghis Khan returned to Karakorum, Batu opted to stay in the Idil region—the core of the Jochid Ulus that had expanded during this campaign—and to found a city that would subsequently be named Sarai. The year 1242, signifying the conclusion of the Second Kipchak Campaign, is also recognized as the formal establishment date of the Jochid Ulus. The boundaries of the state included the Desht-i Kipchak, a portion of Khwarezm, the North Caucasus, Siberia, Crimea, and the territories of the Idil Bulgar State, yet the influence of the Jochids reached a considerably wider area. During this campaign, the Russian principalities were subjugated, the groundwork for Golden Horde dominance in the Balkans was established, and all of Europe faced a novel threat.

This state has enjoyed several names throughout history. In particular, Eastern sources often employ the term "Jochid Ulus," while it was also called Desht-i Kipchak (the Kipchak Steppe) due to the fact that the Kipchaks comprised of the main population of the state. In Arabic and Persian sources, the state is referred to by the name of the reigning khan or the geographical region: "The Land of Berke, the Great Khan of the Tatars," "The Land of Özbek, the Khan of the Northern Countries," "The Land of Tokhta, Khan of Desht-i Kipchak," "The Ulus of Batu," and "The Ulus of Berke."[8] The accounts of Russian chronicles include phrases such as "The prince went to Tsar Sartak"[9] and "The prince went to the Tatars".[10] By the 1290s, the term "orda" emerged.[11] The word "orda" or "ordu" was used in Turkic and Mongolian languages to mean "tent," "homeland," "the khan's domain," or "the palace residence."

8 V. Yegorov, *Zolotaya Orda: Mifi i Realnosti,* İzdatelstvo Znanie, Moskva 1990, p.16; İ. Kamalov, "Altın Orda Devleti'nin Adı Üzerine", *TDA*, 141, (2002), p. 116.

9 *PSRL, VII, Ermolinskaya Letopisy*, yay. A. İ. Tsepkov, İzdatelstvo Aleksandriya, Ryazan 2000, p.116.

10 *PSRL, XII, Lavrentyevskaya Letopisy*, yay. A. İ. Tsepkov, İzdatelstvo Aleksandriya, Ryazan 2001, p.447.

11 *PSRL, II, Voskresenskaya Letopisy*, yay. A. İ. Tsepkov, İzdatelstvo Aleksandriya, Ryazan 1998, p.238.

The term "Golden Horde" was first found in the Kazan Chronicle written around 1564.[12] The origin of this term is associated with the khan's headquarters, which was embellished with gold and luxurious textiles. The 14th-century explorer Ibn Battuta characterized the khan's headquarters in the following manner: "Uzbek Khan resides within an elaborately adorned 'golden tent.'" The tent was constructed using wooden poles adorned with golden leaves. At its core stood a throne characterized by silver legs and adorned with valuable gemstones."[13]

The Golden Horde State is recognized as a Turkic-Islamic entity. While the khans governing the state were descendants of Genghis Khan, the influx of Mongols into the region during the state's formation was relatively modest, and these Mongols were rapidly integrated into the diverse population of Kipchaks, Volga Bulgars, and various other Turkic tribes. The Arab historian al-'Umari characterizes this circumstance as follows: "This state (the Golden Horde) was historically the territory of the Kipchaks." However, when the region was invaded by the Tatars, the Kipchaks yielded to their authority. Subsequently, the Tatars integrated with the Kipchaks, establishing familial relationships. The territory surpassed the intrinsic character and heritage of the Tatars. The Tatar population fully assimilated into the Kipchak culture."[14] In this context, al-'Umari denotes the Mongols as Tatars. In addition to the lands conferred upon Jochi, four tribes—Kiyat, Kongirat, Seceut, and Mangit—were also granted. As al-'Umari similarly articulates, these Mongol tribes rapidly underwent Turkification upon their arrival in the region. In the region during the Golden Horde period, ethnic processes reached completion. The demographic composition arising from the amalgamation of Kipchaks, Bulgars, and various Turkic groups was referred to as "Tatars" by the Russians. Nevertheless, the "Tatars" in question were distinct from the "Tatars" previously encountered by Genghis Khan. In addition to the aforementioned groups, various Finno-Ugric ethnicities (Mordvins, Udmurts, Cheremis) and North Caucasian tribes (Alans, Circassians) also inhabited the region.

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12 *Kazanskaya İstoriya*, yay. G. N. Moiseeva, İzdatelstvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, Moskva-Leningrad 1954, p.45.

13 "İz Podarka Nablüdatelyam po Çasti Dikovin Stran i Çudes Puteşestviy İbn Battutı", *Stanovlenie i Raststvet Zolotoy Ordı. İstoçniki po İstorii Ulusa Cuçi (1266-1359),* Tatarskoe Knijnoe İzdatelstvo, Kazan 2011, p.160.

14 el-Ömerî, "Mesâliku'l-Ebsâr fî Memâliku'l-Emsâr", W. Tiesenhausen, *Altın Ordu Devleti Tarihine Ait Metinler,* I, trans. İ. H. İzmirli, Maarif Vekaleti Publications, Istanbul 1941, p.373.



The Political History of the Golden Horde State

Following the demise of Batu Khan in 1255 and the brief tenures of his sons, Sartak and Ulakchi, his sibling Berke assumed the throne in 1256. While Ögedei Khan deemed it suitable for Sartak, the Christian son of Batu, to succeed him following Batu, the unexpected demise of Sartak upon his return to Karakorum has prompted accusations, particularly among Armenian historians, implicating Berke, the first Muslim among the Genghisid descendants, in his death.

During the initial years of Berke Khan's reign, he confronted the Ilkhanate, a related neighboring state. Prior to Berke's accession to the throne, a coalition of emirs had convened and presented Hulagu Khan, the ruler of the Ilkhanate, with a "scabbard devoid of a sword and a collarless garment," symbolizing the vacancy of Batu Khan's throne.[15] Additional factors contributing to the conflict between the two nations encompassed ambiguous borders during the formation period of the two fraternal states, an inability to cooperatively manage the territorially, strategically, and economically significant lands of Azerbaijan and Georgia, as well as the Mamluk Sultanate's ongoing instigation of the Golden Horde khans against their Ilkhanate adversaries. Although the khans of the Golden Horde asserted ownership over the territories of Azerbaijan, the descendants of Jochi contended that Hulagu's involvement in the Middle Eastern campaign merited them a portion of the spoils, additionally emphasizing that prior to the formation of the Ilkhanate, darugas and soldiers dispatched by the Jochids had been designated for appointments in the region. The conflict between the two nations persisted for an extended duration, during which neither party secured a definitive triumph. For instance, in 1262, Hulagu Khan triumphed over Berke in a conflict situated to the north of the Kura River; however, on January 13, 1263, Berke secured a victory against Hulagu in the engagement referred to as the Battle of Derbent. Subsequent to Hulagu's demise on February 8, 1265, Berke engaged in further hostilities with the Ilkhan Abaka. A ferious battle between the two armies took place around Aksu, one of the branches of the Kura River, in July–August 1265, however there was no clear victor. After the battle, both sides waited along the riverbank for two week, after which the Golden Horde army pulled back.[16]

15 Ötemiş Hacı, *Çengiz-Nâme*, p.40.

16 For Golden Horde-Ilkhanid relations during the reign of Berke Khan, see. İ. Kamalov, *Moğolların Kafkasya Politikası*, Kaknüs Publications, Istanbul 2003, pp.38-64.

The civil war between the two brothers undoubtedly exhausted both sides and hindered the continuation of the campaigns of the descendants of Genghis Khan. Arab historical sources indicate that Berke Khan held Hulagu responsible and asserted that the descendants of Genghis Khan had the potential to dominate the entire world if they refrained from internal conflict. Remarkably, Berke Khan framed the conflict with the Ilkhanate to his Muslim constituents as a battle against non-believers, while portraying it to the Mongol troops as an opposition to a descendant of Genghis Khan who transgressed the principles established by Genghis. Berke Khan correctly observed that this conflict preoccupied the agendas of both the Jochids and the Ilkhanate, thereby inhibiting their territorial expansion.

During the rule of Berke Khan, the inaugural Muslim leader of the Golden Horde, considerable developments transpired in the Balkan region. Nogay Mirza, a prominent commander under Berke Khan, was compelled to initiate multiple campaigns against the Byzantine Empire. This was attributed to the Bulgarian Tsar Konstantin Tikh's plea for assistance from Berke against Byzantium, the Byzantine Emperor's efforts to impede the straits and disrupt trade between the Golden Horde and the Mamluks out of apprehension regarding the Ilkhanids, as well as the detention of the former Seljuk Sultan Izzeddin Keykavus and his family, who had sought asylum with the emperor. During the reign of…':'Due to the campaigns, not only was Sultan Kaykaus II released, but the Byzantine Emperor also abolished the restrictions imposed on Black Sea and Bosphorus trade In light of these expeditions, the Balkans too came under the control of Nogai. [17]

Berke Khan diligently addressed another significant matter: the relationship with the Russian principalities. After the Kipchak campaign, the Russian principalities became subordinate to the Golden Horde. The khans of the Golden Horde designated Russian princes, kept their sons as hostages in their courts, and levied taxes on the Russian population. Moreover, the Russian princes were required to attend the khans (to obtain yarliks and fulfill additional responsibilities) and provide them with soldiers.[18] After ascending to the throne, Berke sent darugas officials responsible for civil and military affairs, to the Russian principalities to end their

[17] ez-Zehebî, "Târîhu'l-İslâm", W. Tiesenhausen, I, p.351; *İbni Bibi'nin Farsça Muhtasar Selçuknamesinden Anadolu Selçuklu Devleti Tarihi,* trans. N. Gencosman, Uzluk Basımevi, An- kara 1941, p.268; Aksarayî, Müsâmeretü'l-Ahbâr ve Musâyeretu'l-Ahyâr, trans. M. Öztürk, TTK Publications, Ankara 2000, pp.56-57. Also see İ. Kamalov, "Altın Orda-Bizans Müna- sebetleri (1261-1453)", *Karadeniz Araştırmaları*, Sayı 4, Çorum 2005, pp. 3-21.

[18] İ. Kemaloğlu, *Altın Orda ve Rusya. Rusya Üzerindeki Türk-Tatar Etkisi*, pp.128-172.



rebellions and consolidate control over the Russians. A census was also conducted to organize tax collection, recruit troops from novice soldiers, and identify skilled craftsmen and artisans for assignment within the state apparatus.[19] Moreover, Russian princes were compelled to inscribe the names of the Golden Horde khans on the coins they minted.

During the reign of Berke Khan, the Golden Horde emerged as one of the most formidable states in the region, while it maintained its fealty to the Great Mongol Khan, i.e., Mongolia. Nevertheless, his nephew Mengu Timur (1266-1280), who subsequently inherited the throne, successfully established the Golden Horde as a completely sovereign entity and issued coinage bearing his own name.

It is plausible to attribute Mengu-Timur's emergence as an independent actor during this period to a variety of contributing factors. As the boundaries extended, the governance of the acquired territories from the central authority became progressively challenging. Subsequently, after the Chagatai and Jochi Uluses, the Ilkhanate was founded as a consequence of Hülagü's military campaign. Simultaneously, intense competitions for the position of Great Khan frequently occurred at the central location of Karakorum. Following the demise of Güyük Khan, the descendants of Jochi formed an alliance with the Tuluyids and effectively initiated hostilities against the Ögedei and Chagatai descendants. Following the demise of Möngke Khan, a significant conflict ensued between Kublai and Arik Buka. These elements progressively eroded the commitment of the increasingly influential uluses to the central authority. A major contributing factor during this period was Kublai's decision to move the capital to China following his ascension to the Khanate. Consequently, the uluses likewise experienced a geographical separation from the central area. Subsequently, the uluses abstained from participation in the central kurultai and refrained from joining collaborative campaigns; instead, they frequently engaged in conflicts among themselves. In the contemporary era, the uluses engaged in concerted efforts to preserve their established boundaries. Furthermore, the progressive adoption of Islam by the Chinggisids in the uluses and their assimilation into the vast Turkic populations also contributed to the development of specific divergences between the uluses and the central authority. Subsequent

[19] *PSRL, II, Voskresenskaya Letopisy*, s.217; *PSRL, XII, Lavrentyevskaya Letopisy*, p.496; T. Allsen, "Mongol Census Taking in Rusy, 1245-1274", *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, V/1 (1981), p.32-53.

to the Jochi Ulus attaining independence, the interactions between the parties were predominantly confined to diplomatic and commercial domains.

During the early years of Mengu Timur's reign, peace was established with the Ilkhanids under the pressure of the Great Khan Kublai. However, this peace did not last long. By 1270, Mengu Timur managed to defeat the Ilkhanid Abaka.[20] Nonetheless, this triumph, similar to the accomplishments secured under the rule of Berke Khan, failed to produce any alterations in territorial boundaries. Mengu Timur encountered minimal difficulties on the Russian front. This realization stemmed from the fact that the Russians, having revolted multiple times during the initial years of the Golden Horde's governance, recognized the impracticality of evading this dominance in the short term and observed the significant destruction resulting from the uprisings.

Mengu Timur Khan, despite engaging in fewer military campaigns than Berke Khan, successfully upheld the power of the Golden Horde State throughout his rule. During his tenure, authorization was likewise extended to Genoese and Venetian merchants to establish trading colonies in Crimea. Despite his non-Muslim status causing dissatisfaction among the Mamluks of Egypt, collaboration with the Mamluks persisted, along with ongoing conflict against the Ilkhanids.

Following the reign of Mengü Timur, Tuda Mengü (1280-1287) and Tula Buka (1287-1291) succeeded to the throne in the Golden Horde. According to Ötemiş Hacı, Tuda Mengü, the sibling of Mengü Timur, exhibited symptoms indicative of mental instability.[21] Indeed, after converting to Islam, he abandoned state affairs, befriended dervishes and sheikhs, and abdicated the throne in favor of Tula Buka.[22] Tula Buka initially conducted a successful campaign in the Krakow region. Then, in 1288, he sent a force against Ilkhanid Arghun Khan (1284-1291), but like his predecessors, he was unable to secure winning results. In fact, the battle he personally led against the Ilkhanids in1290, also spelled disaster for him.[23]

During the rule of Tula Buka, a significant factor contributing to the lack of success in the Caucasus was the engagement of one of its key commanders, Nogay,

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[20] Aksarayî, *Müsâmeretü'l-Ahbâr*, s.105; S.Zakirov, *Diplomatiçeskie Otnoşeniya Zolotoy Ordı s Egiptom v XII-XIV vv.*, İzdatelstvo Nauka, Moskva 1966, pp.59-60.

[21] Ötemiş Hacı, *Çengiz-Nâme*, p.46.

[22] Nuveyrî, "Nihâyetu'l-Ereb fî Funûni'l-Edeb", W. Tiesenhausen, I, p.263.

[23] İ. Kamalov, *Moğolların Kafkasya Politikası*, p.72.



in the Balkans. Nogay Mirza, and by extension the Golden Horde's impact in the Balkans, was so substantial that Nogay installed a Bulgarian prince named Smileç (1292-1298), whom he considered his protégé, on the Bulgarian throne. In 1298, Nogai appointed his son Çaka as the Prince of Bulgaria. An indicator of Nogay's influence in the Balkans is the Arabic-inscribed coinage produced in Sakçı in the names of Nogay and Çaka. Drawing from this information, Istvan Vasary posits that Nogay established a novel Nogay Nation located in Sakçı in the Balkan region.[24] Also, in 1292, the Serbian Principality, along with the northern and central parts of the Balkan Peninsula, came under the governance of the Golden Horde. Such advancements inevitably enhanced Nogay's prestige within the country. So much so that in 1291 Nogay assassinated Tula Buka and enabled Tokta to ascend the throne.

Tokta exhibited a more robust leadership in comparison to the two khans who preceded him. Consequently, he harbored no inclination to co-reign with a tribal chieftain. Tokta Khan, having engaged in conflict with Nogay on two occasions, ultimately defeated him in 1300. In 1303, Tokta Khan dispatched a delegation to the Ilkhanid Ghazan, requesting the relinquishment and surrender of the Caucasus region. Nonetheless, neither this delegation nor the minor conflicts between the parties in 1308 yielded any significant outcomes. In contrast to the era of Berke Khan, the Golden Horde ceased to receive even nominal support from the Mamluks.

A notable transformation during the rule of Tokta Khan was the cessation of the Golden Horde's supremacy in the Balkan region. It is also important to emphasize that this circumstance was directly associated with the demise of Nogay. Tokta experienced no difficulties in relation to the Russian principalities. In contrast to previous circumstances, he endorsed the progressively influential principalities of Moscow and Tver.[25]

Following Tokta, his nephew Özbek assumed the throne of the Golden Horde. During the rule of Özbek Khan (1313–1341), the dissemination of Islam permeated the nation, reconstruction initiatives intensified, and mosques and madrasas were constructed in urban areas. Similar to his predecessors, Özbek Khan reaffirmed the Golden Horde's assertions regarding the Caucasus and initiated two campaigns in 1316–1317 and 1335; however, no definitive outcomes were attained.

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24 I. Vasary, "Voenno-Politiçeskie Kontaktı s Vizantiey i Balkanskimi Stranami", pp.512-513.

25 *PSRL, IX, Tipografskaya Letopisy*, yay. A. İ. Tsepkov, İzdatelstvo Aleksandriya, Ryazan 2001, p.141.

Özbek Khan initiated his endorsement of Moscow within the context of the Russian principalities. He also bestowed upon Yuri, the Prince of Moscow, his sister Konchaka, along with the grand princely yarlik. He provided similar assistance to the subsequent Prince of Moscow, Ivan Kalita. This support culminated in a substantial fortification of Moscow and the acquisition of additional Russian principalities. As a result of Moscow's increasing influence, Metropolitan Peter of the Russian Orthodox Church relocated the ecclesiastical center to Moscow. Furthermore, Özbek Khan authorized the Venetians to conduct trade in Crimea, consequently generating additional revenue for the peninsula and the nation at large.

Following Özbek Khan, his eldest son Tinibek reigned briefly from 1341 to 1342. Subsequently, another son, Janibek (1342-1357), succeeded to the throne. Janibek Khan capitalized on the disintegration of the Ilkhanate and initiated a military campaign into Azerbaijan, entering Tabriz with 10,000 cavalry while experiencing minimal opposition.[26] Thus, as a result of the century-long struggle of the Ulus of Jochi, Azerbaijan came under the control of the Golden Horde, albeit briefly. However, Janibek Khan fell ill and left his son Berdibek behind before moving to Sarai. Berdibek following the advice of Emir Tulubay, engaged in fractricide, killing twelve of his brothers. For this reason, he was called "Kökün Kırgan Köten Khan."[27] With the deaths of his son and then himself, the White Horde dynasty that began in 1227 with Batu Khan ended after 133 years.

After the death of Berdibek Khan, a period of interregnum began in the Golden Horde. This situation led to nearly 20 khans ascending the throne between 1360 and 1380. Throughout this period, Mamai Mirza fulfilled a significant role. As Mamai Mirza was not a descendant of Genghis, he was ineligible for the throne; consequently, akin to Nogai Mirza in his era, he placed Genghisid figures loyal to him on the throne, thereby preserving his dominance over the Golden Horde. The most pivotal occurrence of this period was undoubtedly the Golden Horde's initial substantial defeat at the hands of the Russians at Kulikovo on September 8, 1380, subsequent to which the Russians commenced incursions into territories falling under the Golden Horde's jurisdiction. For instance, in the years 1370, 1374, and 1376, the city of Bulgar experienced incursions from Russian forces.[28]

[26] Kazvinî, *Zeyl-i Târîh-i Guzîde*, trans. M. D. Kyazimov, V. Z. Piriev, İzdatelstvo Akademii Nauk Azerbaycanskoy SSR, Bakü 1990, pp.108-111.

[27] Ötemiş Hacı, *Çengiz-Nâme*, p.57.

[28] *PSRL, IX, Tipografskaya Letopisy*, pp.165, 169, 173.

Despite the continuation of Russian loyalty to the Golden Horde for an additional century following this triumph, it was crucial for the Principality of Moscow to acknowledge its capacity to overcome the Golden Horde. Conversely, the Russians persisted in fulfilling their tax obligations to the Golden Horde and obtaining yarliks from Sarai. Indeed, by the conclusion of 1380, Tokhtamysh, bolstered by the backing of Emir Timur, had reestablished cohesion across a significant portion of the Ulus of Jochi.

Following Tokhtamysh Khan's establishment of internal stability, he initiated a military campaign against Moscow in 1382. Between August 23 and 26, 1382, Tokhtamysh's forces laid siege to Moscow and subsequently retreated to Sarai with considerable booty.[29] Despite the continuation of Russian loyalty to the Golden Horde for an additional century following this triumph, it was crucial for the Principality of Moscow to acknowledge its capacity to overcome the Golden Horde. Conversely, the Russians persisted in fulfilling their tax obligations to the Golden Horde and obtaining yarliks from Sarai. Indeed, by the conclusion of 1380, Tokhtamysh, bolstered by the backing of Emir Timur, had reestablished cohesion across a significant portion of the Ulus of Jochi.

Thus, control over the Russian principalities was again established. Having tackled the 'Russian question,' Toktamish then directed his efforts towards the Azerbaijan and Khwarazm regions within the sphere of influence of the Golden Horde. Toktamish and unavoidably came face to face with Emir Timur, who had helped bring him to the throne. Seizing upon Timur's preoccupation with Iran, Toktamish not only minted coinage in his own name, in Khwarazm in 1384, but also returned from his campaign against Tabriz laden with great spoils.[30] and also returned from his campaign in Tabriz with great spoils. Timur was determined to retaliate for these wrongdoings. Indeed, on June 18, 1391, Timur truimphed over Tokhtamysh Khan's army near the Kundurça (Kunduzca) River.[31] On April 14, 1395, the two forces encountered each other once more in proximity to the Terek River, with Timur achieving another victory. During this time, Tokhtamysh Khan sought to establish alliances with the Ottomans and the Mamluks; however, the diplomatic conference convened in Damascus in August 1394 proved to be un-

[29] *PSRL, III, Voskresenskaya Letopisy*, pp. 67-68; *PSRL, VII, Ermolinskaya Letopisy*, pp.172-173; *PSRL, IX, Tipografskaya Letopisy*, pp.194-196.

[30] M. Kafalı, *Altın Orda Hanlığı'nın Kuruluş ve Yükseliş Devirleri*, p.105.

[31] Şerefüddin Ali Yezdî, *Zafernâme,* published by A. Urunbaev, Taşkent 1972, p.217 a.

productive.[32] Timur's diplomatic success, the parties' failure to take the threat of Timur seriously enough, and distrust among the allies were the main reasons why Tokhtamysh and the other members of the alliance were defeated by Timur.

Following Timur's departure, it is documented that Toktamish Khan sought to reassert his authority over the Ulus of Jochi. Despite Toktamish's conflict with Timur Kutluk, who established his khanate with the assistance of Emir Edigey, he faced defeat and sought asylum with the Lithuanian Prince Vytautas. Vytautas welcomed Toktamish and awarded him the city of Lida, placing it under his governance. Toktamish sought military aid from the prince to regain the territories he had forfeited and established a pact with him. As stipulated in the agreement, should Toktamish Khan reclaim the throne in Sarai, he would transfer the Grand Duchy of Moscow to Prince Vytautas. Nevertheless, on August 12, 1399, the joint forces of Vytautas and Toktamish were vanquished by the renowned Emir Edigey of Timur Kutluk Khan, thereby thwarting the ambitions of Toktamish and Vytautas.[33] Having relinquished his opportunity to attain the khanate, Toktamish resided in the isolated areas of the Dasht-i Kipchak for the rest of his life. It is also acknowledged that Toktamish explored means to request forgiveness from Timur; in January 1405, Timur welcomed an envoy from Toktamish in Otrar and pledged to restore this ungrateful acquaintance to his throne.[34] As Edigey's rising influence was met with displeasure by Timur, it is plausible that Timur, who previously utilized Edigey against Toktamish, may have contemplated employing Toktamish against Edigey. Nevertheless, Timur's demise on February 18, 1405, inhibited the realization of this collaboration. Toktamish, who relocated to the vicinity of the city of Tyumen during approximately the same period, also died.

The Demise of the Golden Horde Army

While Toktamish Khan is recognized as the sovereign responsible for the second revitalization of the Golden Horde Khanate, his misguided policies toward Emir Timur led to a renewed phase of fragmentation and interregnum within the Golden Horde. It would be inaccurate to ascribe this circumstance exclusively to

[32] For this alliance, see İ. Kamalov-İ. Mirgaleev, "Altın Orda-Osmanlı Münasebetleri", *Akademik Bakış*, II/3 (Kış 2008), pp.187-198.

[33] *PSRL, VI, Tverskaya Letopisy*, yay. A. İ. Tsepkov, İzdatelstvo Aleksandriya, Ryazan 2000, p.445; *PSRL, III, Voskresenskaya Letopisy*, pp.104-105.

[34] G. Vernadskiy, *Mongolı i Rusy*, p.289.

the campaigns of Timur. In fact, as Hayrunnisa Alan also emphasized, had Timur's campaign successfully led to the dissolution of the Golden Horde, it would have been reasonable to expect that the Ottoman Empire, which suffered an even more severe blow from the same figure, might have also undergone a collapse.[35]

In addition to Timur's military campaigns and the economic impact he had on the Golden Horde, several other factors, including the interregnum periods preceding the reign of Toktamish Khan, the insurrection of emirs against recalcitrant khans, intervention in succession disputes, the 1380 defeat at the hands of the Russians at Kulikovo, and the escalating influence of the Moscow Principality, contributed to the fragmentation of the Golden Horde. The plague epidemic in the latter half of the 14th century had a detrimental impact on the economic condition of the state. It is also essential to recall that prior to Toktamish's accession to the throne facilitated by Timur, the Golden Horde was undergoing an interregnum. Consequently, similar to Toktamish's actions, the emergence of powerful khans such as Tokta, Özbek, and Canibek during this era and their potential restoration of unity within the Golden Horde could have extended its existence. Nevertheless, the beys who opposed the establishment of a robust khan in the Golden Horde sought to preserve their influence by appointing an individual from the lineage of Genghis Khan as khan, subject to their authority. In fact, a significant contributing factor to the dissolution of the Golden Horde was the policies implemented by the emirs. Following Toktamish, Edigey, akin to Nogai and Mamai in their respective periods, emerged as a co-ruler and played a significant role in the disintegration of the Golden Horde.

Subsequent to the reign of Toktamish Khan, control over the Golden Horde was acquired by Edigey Mirza. This emir, who commenced his involvement in state matters during the lifetimes of Mamai Mirza and Toktamish, belonged to the Mangit tribe and was characterized by both courage and shrewdness. The Mangits, who had previously supported Nogai 130 years prior, similarly aided Edigey Mirza in acquiring power. Consequently, he also commenced his governance through puppet khans—Timur Kutluğ, Shadibek, Fuladbek, and Timur.

A primary concern that Edigey emphasized was the Russian issue. The Moscow Prince's omission of tax remittances and his efforts to assert independence undoubtedly attracted Edigey's attention, culminating in Edigey's decision to initiate

[35] H. Alan, "Timur'un Toktamış Üzerine Seferleri ve Altın Orda'nın Yıkılması Meselesi", *Bilig,* S.27 (2003), p.139.

a campaign against Moscow in 1408. This campaign exhibits numerous resemblances to Toktamish's expedition. Similar to Toktamish, Edigey achieved considerable success in maintaining the confidentiality of the campaign and dispatched an envoy to Moscow to communicate that Pulat Sultan would commence a campaign targeting Lithuania.[36] Edigey Mirza captured the cities of Pereyaslavl, Rostov, Dmitriyev, and Serpukhov along the way and reached the gates of Moscow on November 30. Edigey dispatched an emissary to Moscow to notify the city's residents of his intention to reside during the winter in a headquarters set up at the city's periphery, cautioning that they would face starvation and exposure under such conditions. Reflecting on the outcomes of Toktamish's campaign, the populace agreed to all of Edigey's terms. Consequently, the residents of Moscow expended 3,000 silver rubles to evade Edigey's assault. On December 20, 1408, Edigey returned to his native land, having caused no harm to Moscow.[37] Before returning to the court, in a letter sent to Prince Vasiliy, he instructed that if Toktamish Khan's sons sought refuge with him, they were not to be accepted, and that if taxes were not paid, punishment would be imposed and the old conditions would apply (December 1408).[38]

Although Edigey conducted a successful campaign against Moscow, he was unable to prevent the civil wars within the country. In 1411, when Jalal al-Din, the son of Toktamish Khan, seized the throne, Edigey Mirza was forced to leave the capital Sarai. In 1416, despite his victory over Lithuanian Prince Vitovt, the extensive devastation of Lithuanian lands, and the capture of thousands, he was soon compelled to engage in conflict with Kadir Birde, a son of Toktamish Khan, in proximity to the Volga River. Notwithstanding Kadir Birde's demise in combat, Edigey Mirza's forces experienced a defeat, resulting in the capture of the injured Edigey Mirza. Edigey Mirza, who passed away in 1419, was interred in the steppes located to the east of Astrakhan.[39]

Similar to the Nogai and Mamai mirzas, Edigey significantly contributed to the historical narrative of the Golden Horde State. Given that these emirs initiated

36 G. Vernadskiy, *Mongolı i Rusy*, p.293.

37 *PSRL, III, Voskresenskaya Letopisy*, s.118-119; *PSRL, IX, Tipografskaya Letopisy*, pp.224-225.

38 A. M. Özyetgin-İ. Kemaloğlu, *Altın Orda Hanlığına Ait Resmî Yazışmalar*, TTK Publications, Ankara 2017, pp.3-6.

39 R. Fahreddin, *Hanı Zolotoy Ordı*, Kazan 1996, pp.52-53; R. Fahreddin, *Altın Ordu ve Kazan Hanları*, trans. İ. Kamalov, Kaknüs Publications, Istanbul 2003, pp.76-77.



military campaigns against the Russian Principalities, Lithuania, the Ilkhanate, Byzantium, and the Balkans, it is clear that their areas of influence surpassed the confines of the Golden Horde. As these emirs lacked royal ancestry, precluding their succession to the throne, they engaged in the succession disputes of the Golden Horde by mobilizing the backing of their respective tribes, possibly serving as the primary instigators of these conflicts. The Golden Horde khans, preoccupied with the disorder resulting from the succession disputes among the emirs, neglected the progressive ascendancy of the Moscow-centered Russian Principalities.

Following Edigey's demise, the competition for the throne among the descendants of Genghis Khan in the Golden Horde experienced a significant escalation, leading to the establishment of the Kazan, Crimean, Astrakhan, First Shaybanid, and Siberian khanates, alongside the Nogai Horde, within the boundaries of the Golden Horde State. The relocation of certain tribes from the eastern regions of the Golden Horde to Turkestan resulted in the formation of the Kazakh and Bukhara khanates. Notwithstanding these fragmentations, the Golden Horde persisted under the designation of the Great Horde until 1502.

The State Apparatus of The Golden Horde

Following the demise of his eldest son, Jochi, Genghis Khan apportioned the territories of the Desht-i Kipchak among his sons Batu and Orda. Consequently, the territories of the Right Wing, along with the regions adjacent to the Volga, were awarded to Batu Khan; the territories of the Left Wing and the areas along the Syr Darya were conferred to Orda Khan. Consequently, the Ulus of Jochi was initially bifurcated into the White Horde and the Blue Horde, each governed by lineages of the descendants of Genghis Khan, following the conventional Turkic state structure of right and left wings. The Khans of the Blue Horde maintained their subordinate status relative to the lineage of Batu Khan.[40] Although the sovereign of the state possessed the title of "Khan," the khatuns (queens) also significantly contributed to the political and administrative functions of the state. The khatuns engaged in succession conflicts, conferred privileges upon Russian clergy, and governed trade relations with international nations.[41]

[40] Ötemiş Hacı, *Çengiz-Nâme*, s.31-33; M. Kafalı, "Altın Orda Hanlığı", Türkler, VIII, yay. H. C. Güzel-K. Çiçek-S. Koca, Yeni Türkiye Publications, Ankara 2002, p.399.

[41] İ. Kemaloğlu, "Altın Orda Devleti", *Avrasya'nın Sekiz Asrı: Çengizoğulları*, ed. H. Alan-İ Kemaloğlu, Ötüken Publishers, Istanbul 2016, p.133.

The kurultais convened with the participation of the Khan, his consorts, the Khans of the Blue Horde, the Khan's offspring, and tribal leaders (tümen beys and bin beys) were forums for discussing critical state-related topics, including the selection of the Khan, the proclamation of war, and other pertinent matters. The chiefs (emirs) of tribes such as Kiyat, Kongrat, Mangit, Shirin, Barin, and Sekut, who held the titles of tümen bey and bin bey, especially gained influence in the governance of the country during the years of interregnum.

Given that they were not blood related to the dynasty of Genghis Khan, they were ineligible to assume the title of Khan; consequently, they intermittently installed feeble individuals from the lineage of Genghis Khan onto the throne to sustain oversight of the nation's administration. In the long term, this practice additionally contributed to the disintegration of the Golden Horde.

Among the various official positions within the administration of the Golden Horde were the atalık (vizier), yasa emir, defterdar (scribes), kadı (judge), yargıcı (jurist), and tamgacı (nişancı, chancery officer).[42] Furthermore, the beys who were sons-in-law of the khan (küregen) and those granted exemptions from taxes and other obligations by the khan's decree (tarhan) were likewise regarded as esteemed individuals within the Golden Horde. The army, organized according to the decimal system, consisted of tümen (units of ten thousand) and divisions of one thousand units. The hereditary chieftains of the Mongolian tribes were at the forefront of the tümen. The sporadic rebellions of the tribal beys against the khans were predicated on the military prowess they possessed. The khans established the tribal division system throughout the Golden Horde State, delineating the nation into "yurts." Therefore, the khans distributed yurts to the başbuğs, who subsequently delegated them to the tümen beys, followed by their allocation from tümen beys to bin beys, then from bin beys to yüz beys, and ultimately from yüz beys to on beys.[43] The khan also had an right to confiscate or to change the ownership of the yurts.

Ordinary citizens were required to fulfill their tax obligations. A variety of taxes were levied on the Golden Horde and its subordinate territories, comprising one-tenth of agricultural yields, kopchur assessed at one-one hundredth of livestock herds, tamga from traders, tütün collected on a per-household basis (or per chimney), dany (a form of tribute or exit tax) from the Russians, yam (an ulag

[42] M. Kafalı, "Altın Orda Hanlığı", pp.406-407.

[43] M. Kafalı, *Altın Orda Hanlığı'nın Kuruluş ve Yükseliş Devirleri,* pp.126-131.



tax) to finance the expenses of the yam system, süsün for supplying provisions to messengers and traveling state officials along with their animals, in addition to taxes such as sabanlık, hunting fees, bridge tolls, army levies, and koltka (gifts).[44] Tax collection constituted one of the responsibilities of officials known as daruga (baskak). Furthermore, darugas oversaw the governors of territories and nations associated with the Golden Horde, administered censuses, enlisted troops from local populations in conquered areas, established postal systems, and conveyed the taxes gathered to the khan.[45]

One of the most sophisticated institutions in the Golden Horde was the yam organization. Postal stations were established at intervals of a one-day journey, where spare horses were kept for the state's official couriers and envoys.[46] At these stations, merchants, envoys, messengers, and the general populace were afforded the opportunity to rest, exchange their horses, and obtain provisions. It is acknowledged that certain postal stations were equipped with additional postal riders, in addition to reserve horses. While the operational costs of these facilities were initially financed through local taxes in the areas where the stations were erected, subsequently, the state commenced the provision of postal riding animals.[47] These yam stations facilitated the rapid and secure navigation of roadways within the Golden Horde. Undoubtedly, this had a beneficial impact on the advancement of diplomacy, communication, and commerce.

Islam in The Golden Horde

The first descendant of Genghis Khan to embrace Islam was Berke, the sovereign of the Golden Horde. In Ötemiş Hacı's Cengiz-Nâme, it is asserted that prior to assuming the throne, Berke Khan resided in Khwarezm and developed familiarity with Islam through Sheikh Seyfeddin Baherzî, a disciple of Sheikh Najm al-Din

44 For the taxes collected in the Golden Horde and its dependent territories, refer to İ. N. Berezin, *Vnutrennee Ustroystvo Zolotoy Ordı Po Hanskim Yarlıkam*, İzdatelstvo İmperatorskoy Aka- demii Nauk Publications, St. Peterburg 1850; İ. Kemaloğlu, *Altın Orda ve Rusya. Rusya Üzerindeki Türk Tatar Etkisi*, pp.148-156; M. Özyetgin, *Eski Türk Vergi Sistemleri*, Köksav Publications, Ankara 2004, pp.47-51. .

45 I. Vasary, "The Golden Horde Term Daruga And Its Survival in Russia", *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hung*, XXX/2 (1976), pp.187-197.

46 *Manghol-un Niuça Tobça'an. Moğolların Gizli Tarihi*, trans. A. Temir, TTK Publications, An- kara 1995, pp.203-204.

47 B. Spuler, *İran Moğolları*, trans. C. Köprülü, TTK Publications, Ankara 1987, p.220.

Kubra, and that he was purportedly born a Muslim.[48] Arabic sources furnish similar information.[49] Ötemiş Hacı and the Arabic sources indicate that Sheikh Najm al-Din Kubra and his disciple Sheikh Seyfeddin Baherzî significantly contributed to Berke Khan's adoption of Islam. Furthermore, the Western traveler Rubruck, who attended Batu's court in 1253, documented that Berke declared himself to be a Muslim and prohibited the consumption of pork within his tent.[50] On the other hand, florished throughout the Golden Horde and during the time of Özbek Khan became the state's official religion.

Özbek Khan is thought to have converted to Islam during his childhood. His uncle, Berdibek Khan, had all the male members of the lineage killed to ensure his own son's uncontested reign, thereby committing fractricide. However, Özbek, his nephew, was secretly smuggled away to Dagestan. Therefore, Özbek was raised among Muslims and converted to the religion.[51] One of the most important sources on this matter, Ötemiş Hacı's *Cengiz-Nâme*, narrates the story in the form of a story, narrating that after debates among representatives of different religions, Özbek Khan decided to convert to Islam.[52] The 14th-century author al-Birzali describes Özbek's conversion as follows:

> Tokhta [Khan] was regarded as a kafir (infidel) and a pagan. He exhibited a preference for Muslims over other groups, held physicians in high regard, and extended significant benevolence towards them. He possessed a son who was deemed more attractive than any other individual. This son identified as a Muslim. Despite his lack of comprehension of the Great Qur'an's significance, he enjoyed listening to it. Upon attaining control of the nation, his intention was to permit no religion aside from Islam. Özbek Khan ascended to the position of khanship, subsequently

48 Ötemiş Hacı, *Çengiz-Nâme,* p.41; There are similar stories in other sources, see Cüzcanî, "Tabakat-ı Nasırî", W. G. Tiesenhausen, *Sbornik Materialov Otnosyaşihsya k İstorii Zolotoy Ordı, II: İzvleçeniya İz Persidksih Soçineniy*, İzdatelstvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, Moskva-Leningrad 1941, p.16.

49 J. Richard, "Berke Han'ın İslâm'a Girişi ve Altın Orda Hanlığında İslâmiyetin Yayılışı", trans. A.Yuvalı, *Türk Kültürü,* No. 306 (1988), pp.635-637.

50 Wilhelm von Rubruk, *Moğolların Büyük Hanına Seyahat,* trans. E. Ayan, Ayışığı Kitapları, Istanbul 2012, pp.60-61.

51 İ. Mirgaleev, "Svdeniya Abdülgaffar Kırımı Ob İslamizatsii v Zolotoy Orde", *İslam i Vlasty v Zolotoy Orde, Tsentr İssledovaniy İstorii Zolotoy Ordı,* ed. İ. İ. Mirgaleev-E. G. Sayfetdinova, Kazan 2012, p.13.

52 Ötemiş Hacı, *Çengiz-Nâme,* pp.52-54.

executing numerous sorcerers and magicians, and announcing the dominance of Islam through its symbols.[53]

The dissemination of Islam across the nation was indisputably a protracted endeavor. Nevertheless, the inclusion of the territories of the Volga Bulgar State within the Golden Horde, which had officially embraced Islam as early as 922, along with the preeminence of affluent Muslim merchants from Khwarezm and Bulgaria in regional trade—thereby impacting both domestic and foreign policy—enhanced and expedited this phenomenon. Moreover, the political and economic collaboration between the Golden Horde and the Mamluks of Egypt significantly facilitated the dissemination of Islam within the Golden Horde. Although the Mamluk sultans utilized Islamic rhetoric to motivate the Golden Horde khans amidst the conflict between the Golden Horde and the Ilkhanate, they also rendered tangible assistance, as demonstrated by the establishment of the Sultan Baybars Mosque in the Crimean Peninsula.

With the formal acknowledgment of Islam as the state religion, significant transformations commenced in the nation. Primarily, in conjunction with the legal framework established by Genghis Khan, the principles of Sharia law were also enforced. The khans no longer sourced their authority from the might of the Eternal Sky but rather from the assent of Allah Almighty. This is explicitly evident in the titles conferred upon the khans: "The Greatness of Islam and Muslims," "The Pillar of Religion," "The Honor of Islam and Muslims," "The Sword of the Muslim Ruler."[54]

The most conspicuous manifestation of Islamization was the alteration in the architectural landscape of urban centers. The quantity of mosques and madrasas experienced a significant and rapid growth across all urban centers of the Golden Horde. As Islam expanded, Sufi lodges arose predominantly in the Idil region, Crimea, and Khwarezm, located within the domains of the Golden Horde. Certain lodges were supported by substantial endowments and directly benefited from the patronage of the governing authorities.

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53 Alemeddin Birzalî, "Tarih-i Birzalî", W. G. Tiesenhausen, *Altın Ordu Devleti Tarihine Ait Metinler*, I, trans. İ. H. İzmirli, Maarif Matbaası, Istanbul 1941, pp.315-316.

54 İ. İzmaylov-M. Usmanov, "İslam v Uluse Cuçi", *İstoriya Tatar s Drevneyşih Vremön v Semi Tomah, Tom III: Ulus Cuçi (Zolotaya Orda) XIII-Seredina XV Veka*, İnstitut İstorii İmeni Ş. Mercani, Kazan 2009, p.610.

The inhabitants of the Golden Horde adhered to the Hanafi school of Islamic jurisprudence. Nevertheless, representatives of alternative sects were also in attendance. Ibn Battuta observes that in the city of Sarai, alongside twelve Hanafi mosques, there existed one mosque associated with the Shafi'i sect.[55] Similarly, a policy of tolerance towards other religions continued. Notably, during the rule of Berke Khan, the inaugural sovereign to embrace Islam, the Orthodox Bishopric was established in the capital city of Sarai. Similar to other Turkish states, all members of the clergy associated with diverse religions within the Golden Horde were exempt from all forms of taxation and mandatory duties. Yarliks issued by the Khan and khatuns to Russian metropolitans mandated that clergy and their family members were to be protected from harm, treated with respect, exempt from taxation, and that stringent penalties would be levied against individuals who contravened these stipulations.[56]

The Cities in the Golden Horde

The principal city of the Golden Horde State was Sarai, established by Batu on the left bank of the Volga River after the conclusion of the Second Kipchak Campaign. Commonly referred to as Sarai-Batu, this city rapidly ascended to the position of the most significant political and economic hub in the area, owing to its strategic geographical location, displacing Bulgar, which had maintained the status of the region's foremost city for centuries. Moreover, scholarly sources reference the terms Sarai-Berke and Sarai al-Jadid. Diverse perspectives exist regarding this topic. In our view, Sarai-Batu progressively acquired the name Sarai-Berke, probably as a result of the city's complete transformation into a genuine urban hub during the rule of Berke. Sarai al- Jadid, on the other hand, was a city reconstructed during Özbek Khan's period following the adoption of Islam.

The name of the city of Sarai originates from the palace known as Altun-Taş, situated at the heart of the city where the khans had their residence. According to al-'Umari, this grand palace was adorned with a golden crescent at its apex, with a weight equivalent to that of two Egyptian balances. The palace was entirely surrounded by defensive walls and multiple structures. During the winter months, the

[55] D. V. Vasilyev, *İslam v Zolotoy Orde. İstoriko-Arheologiçeskoe İssledovanie*, Astrahanskiy Universitet, Astrahan 2007, p.32.

[56] A. M. Özyetgin-İ. Kemaloğlu, *Altın Orda Hanlığına Ait Resmî Yazışmalar*, TTK Publications, Ankara 2017, pp.61-86.



prominent emirs of the khanate would inhabit these structures; in the summer, they would join the khan as part of the Khanate Army.[57]

With the adoption of Islam, architectural forms such as mosques, madrasas, mausoleums, caravanserais, baths, and comparable structures began to be erected in the urban environment. The most comprehensive information regarding Sarai is furnished by the Arab explorer Ibn Battuta. In his assessment, the marketplaces and thoroughfares of Sarai-Berke exhibited economic prosperity, with no unoccupied or dilapidated areas interspersed among the dwellings. The city extended across a considerable area, necessitating the traveler's circumnavigation on horseback from dawn until dusk. Ethnic groups such as Turks, Mongols, Ossetians, Circassians, Greeks, and Russians resided in distinct districts. Each district possessed its own markets, bazaars, and workshops.[58] Boasting a population of 75,000 and a vast territory, Sarai ranked among the largest cities in Europe by the mid-14th century.[59] Excavations carried out by Russian archaeologists in the region where the remnants of Sarai were discovered suggest that ceramic and metal arts were advanced in Sarai, and that tailoring and embroidery workshops were operational within the city.[60]

In addition to Sarai, prominent cities referenced in the sources encompass Bulgar, Magyar, Ukek, Suvar, Bilyar, Orda-Bazar, Saraychik, Astrakhan, Kaffa, Kerch, Sudak, Khwarezm (Urgench), and Gulistan. The urban centers of the Golden Horde achieved their zenith during the rule of Özbek Khan. Nevertheless, the political instability and economic crisis that commenced shortly following his demise significantly impacted these urban centers. Furthermore, the two campaigns conducted by Emir Timur, intended to undermine the economy of the Golden Horde, resulted in substantial destruction to Sarai and other key cities.

Conversely, the urban areas developed into hubs of commerce. The geographical position of the Golden Horde State facilitated the passage of significant trade routes through the region. Furthermore, the khans' substantial focus on trade played a vital role in the advancement of commerce. The rationale behind this was that trade constituted one of their most significant sources of revenue.

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57 el-'Ömerî, "Mesâliku'l-Ebsâr fî Memâliku'l-Emsâr", W. Tiesenhausen, I, pp.386-388.

58 "İz Podarka Nablüdatelyam po Çasti Dikovin Stran i Çudes Puteşestviy İbn Battutı", p.171.

59 V. L. Yegorov, "Saray, Sarayçik, Bahçisaray", *Rodina,* III-IV (1997), pp.74-75.

60 A. V. Tereşenko, "Okonçatelnoe İssledovanie Mestnosti Saraya s Oçerkom Sledov Deştikıpçakskoğo Tsarstva", *Zapiski Akademii Nauk*, 2 (1854), pp.89-105.

To guarantee the security of trade routes and merchants, thus promoting the advancement of commerce, the Golden Horde and various Turkic-Mongol entities established the "ortak" organization. Derived from the Uighurs, this organization functioned as a trade enterprise that facilitated the acquisition of low-interest loans from the state treasury, particularly supporting extensive and international trade activities. Furthermore, this organization offered exemption from a variety of duties and taxes. Consequently, it occupied a distinguished status relative to other local merchant organizations.[61] Consequently, trade was subjected to state regulation and received governmental support. The significance attributed to trade by the khans is evident in the privileges conferred upon merchants. In the Golden Horde, commercial travel was encouraged, caravans were allowed to traverse conflict zones during war, and captured merchants were freed irrespective of their nationality.[62]

In commerce with regions and nations such as Central Asia, the Ilkhanids, the Mamluks, the Mediterranean, Byzantium, Europe, the Russian Principalities, Lithuania, Genoa, and Venice, the products exported by the Golden Horde to international markets encompassed furs, leathers, beeswax, a variety of grains, cheese, fish, horses, and slaves.[63]

Scientific Endeavours in the Golden Horde

During the reign of Berke Khan, the construction of mosques and madrasas commenced in the urban centers of the Golden Horde, with a particular emphasis on the capital, Saray. Bulgar, conversely, had established itself as a prominent religious hub in the region beginning in the 10th century. Reflecting a trend observed in numerous Islamic nations of the era, astronomical research enjoyed considerable popularity and sophistication within the Golden Horde. The geographic characteristics, exemplified by brief days and extended nights, significantly influenced the advancement of this discipline. Notably, Bulgar emerged as a hub for time determination through the observation of celestial objects and made substantial

61 Z. V. Togan, *Umumî Türk Tarihine Giriş*, Enderun Publications, Istanbul 1981, pp.121, 125, 309- 311; M. Özyetgin, "Eski Türklerde Ortak 'Tüccar' Terimi Üzerine", *Orta Zaman Türk Dili ve Kültürü Üzerine*, Ötüken Publications, Istanbul 2005, pp.170-178.

62 *PSRL, II, Voskresenskaya Letopisy*, p.237.

63 A. N. Kurat, "Bulgar", *İA,* II, p.786.



advancements in the field of astronomy.[64] El-'Umarī's work records the kinds of achievements obtained in this regard:

> A notable city is Bulgar. The duration of its shortest night is 4.5 hours. Hasan Rumî asserts that he inquired of Mesud, who held the position of timekeeper in Bulgar. He stated: "We evaluated this using observational tools. Our estimation was 4.5 hours, which represents the shortest night in that location." Regarding the city of Akgöl, we conducted an analysis and determined its shortest night to be 3.5 hours, which is one hour less than that of Bulgar. The journey on foot from Bulgar to Akgöl constitutes a 20-day endeavor.[65]

A notable indicator of the progress of astronomy in the Golden Horde is the reference to astrolabes in Kutb's work, "Husrev and Şirin," along with the claim that each star constitutes a distinct world, the recognition of extensive distances among stars, and the concept of the universe as being in a state of continuous motion. Furthermore, several works pertaining to astronomy were authored. For instance, in 1354, Kemaleddin al-Turkmeni from Gulistan authored a commentary on the notable astronomical work of the Khwarezmian scholar Omar al-Ṣaghminī. In addition to astronomy, geography, medicine, and mathematics also experienced significant advancements in the area. Sources refer to the geographer and explorer Alaeddin Numan Ibn Davletshah Ibn Ali al-Khwarizmi.[66] Al-Khwarizmi, who visited Damascus, Cairo, and Mecca, authored many Works in mathematics, differing from his geographical notes. Among these are *et-Tuhfe fi 'ilm al-hisâb* (The Masterpiece in the Science of Calculation) and *Al-Ikna fi 'ilm al-misaha*.[67]

The geographer Alaeddin Numan Ibn Davletshah Ibn Ali al-Khwarizmi was also a physician. The Arab author al-Birzali noted that he served as the chief

64 G. Davletşin, "Nauçnıe i Prikladnıe Znaniya", *İstoriya Tatar s Drevneyşih Vremön v Semi Tomah, III: Ulus Cuçi (Zolotaya Orda) XIII-Seredina XV v.,* İnstitut İstorii İmeni Ş. Mercani, Kazan 2009, p.645.

65 el-Ömerî, "Mesâliku'l-ebsâr fî memâliku'l-emsâr", pp.379-380.

66 G. Davletşin, "Nauçnıe i Prikladnıe Znaniya", p.646.

67 For such studies, see. İ. Fazlıoğlu, "Altın-Orda Ülkesi'nde İlk Matematik Kitabı: Hesap Biliminde Şaheser [et-Tuhfe fî ilmi'l-hisâb]", *Teoman Duralı'ya Armağan (Bir Felsefe-Bilim Çağrısı),* ed. C. Çakmak, Dergâh Publications, Istanbul 2008, pp.224-259. İ. Fazlıoğlu, *Uy- gulamalı Geometrinin Tarihine Giriş: el-İkna fi İlmi'l-Misaha,* Dergâh Publications, Istanbul 2004.

physician of the Khwarezm Hospital.[68] Al-Khwarizmi was summoned to the capital Saray during the reign of Tokhta Khan and became a venerated scholar for the palace. In addition to this chief physician, many other Khwarezmian scholars gained fame in the Golden Horde. Among the names mentioned in the sources are Muhammad Hoca al-Khwarizmi, Alaeddin Aydogdu al-Khwarizmi, and Shujauddin Abdurrahman al-Khwarizmi al-Tarjuman.[69] It is recognized that medical scholars of the era possessed knowledge of numerous diseases and epidemics, including leprosy, cholera, and plague, and that they employed a variety of herbs, minerals, and thermal waters in their therapeutic practices.

In addition to Khwarezm, Bulgar and Sarai were significant centers of intellectual activity within the Golden Horde. Among these individuals, Mahmud al-Bulgari distinguishes himself. In his treatise *Nahju'l-Faradis*, authored in 1358, it is documented that a female individual experienced relief from infertility after undergoing psychological therapy, and that physicians were capable of assessing patients' pulse rates.[70] Additional scholars from Bulgar referenced in the sources encompass Burhaneddin Ibrahim ibn Huzir al-Bulgari al-Hanafi, who penned a treatise entitled *Usulu'l-Husami*. Similarly, Muhammad al-Bulgari penned the treatises *Hazinetu'l-Ulema and Zinetu'l-Fuqaha*. Burhaneddin Ibrahim ibn Yusuf al-Bulgari composed *Kitabu Sharhi Adabi's-Sahāif* (1350). The jurist Najmuddin Abu'r-Rija Muhtar ibn Mahmud ibn Muhammad al-Kazani al-Hanafi az-Zahidi (d. 1289) authored *Risalatu'n-Nasiriya* and submitted it to Berke Khan. Prominent scholars from Sarai include Minhajuddin Ibrahim ibn Suleyman al-Sarai, who passed away in 1369–1370, and Vaiz al-Nasih Ahmed ibn Shams al-Sarai, who was characterized by Ibn al-Arabshah as being "proficient in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish, as well as informed about contemporary affairs." Notably, Suleyman al-Sarai authored the work *Mafatihu'l-Eklaf* in 1369. Similar to numerous scholars, Shams al-Sarai was brought to Samarkand by Timur.[71]

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[68] A. Birzalî, "Tarih-i Birzalî", W. G. Tiesenhausen, *Altın Ordu Devleti Tarihine Ait Metinler*, I, trans. İ. H. İzmirli, Maarif Matbaası, Istanbul 1941, pp.316, 318.

[69] C. İzgi, "Canı Bek Han Devrinde (1342-1357) Altınordu Hanlığında Bilim", *Divan,* 2 (1996), p.154.

[70] G. Davletşin, "Nauçnıe i Prikladnıe Znaniya," p.650.

[71] Ş. Mercanî, *Müstefâdü'l-Ahbâr Fi Ahvâl-i Kazan ve Bulgar*, yay. E. N. Hayrullin, Atatürk Kültür Merkezi Publications, Ankara 2008, pp.110-112; C. İzgi, "Canı Bek Han Devrinde (1342- 1357) Altınordu Hanlığında Bilim", p.156.

Different scientific disciplines similarly evolved in various cities within the Golden Horde. The Crimean judge Ruknuddin Ahmed b. Muhammad b. Abdilmumin al-Qirimi al-Hanafi (d. 1381) is credited with the composition of the texts *Sharh Sahihi'l-Bukhari* and *Majma'u'l-Ahlak wa'n-Nasa'ih*. Similarly, Shamsuddin al-Suhawi, a distinguished historian of the 15th century, references in his work ad-Daw' al-Lami' the names of numerous scholars possessing the nisba al-Qirimi.[72] While Hussein b. Ali al-Sighnaki (d. 1311) was raised in Sighnak, another great jurist, Husamuddin Hamid b. Asim al-Barchinli, lived in Barchinligkent. Karshili Jamal, the author of *Mulhaqat al-Surah*, who met him in Barchinligkent in 1273, noted that "his Arabic works were sophisticated, his Persian works were beautiful, and his Turkish works were authentic."[73]

As is evidenced through the scholarly endeavors and output across diverse scientific disciplines in multiple regions of the Golden Horde. Regrettably, the majority of the scholarly works from this period have not survived to today. Nevertheless, it is evident from the surviving sources that the khans, in addition to their support for urban centers and diverse crafts, also extended patronage to scholars and scientists.

72 İ. Fazlıoğlu, "Altın-Orda Ülkesi'nde İlk Matematik Kitabı: Hesap Biliminde Şaheser [*et-Tuhfe fî ilmi'l-hisâb*]", pp.234-240.

73 C. İzgi, "Canı Bek Han Devrinde (1342-1357) Altınordu Hanlığında Bilim", pp.160-161.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: The Mausoleum of Jochi Khan, Founder of the Golden Horde (Ulus of Jochi), Located in Present-Day Kazakhstan



Source: İlyas Kemaloğlu Archive

Appendix 2: The Ceremonial Headdress (Crown) Presented by Özbek Khan of the Golden Horde to Prince Yuri of Rus' (Armoury Chamber, Moscow)



Source: İlyas Kemaloğlu Archive

Appendix 3: The Inscription Commissioned by Emir Timur as a Commemorative Monument During His Campaign Against Tokhtamysh Khan (Hermitage Museum / St. Petersburg)



Source: İlyas Kemaloğlu Archive

Appendix 4: Bulgar, One of the Major Cities of the Golden Horde (Tatarstan / Russian Federation)



Source: İlyas Kemaloğlu Archive

The Timurid State


Legend
Peak
Stream
Lake
Town
Border
Elevation (m)
8126
-400
Datum: WGS1984. Projection: Robinson
DEM: NASA Shuttle Radar Topography Mission
Atilla Karataş
Moskova
Kiev
Minsk
Polotsk
Smolensk
Nizni Novogrod
Kazan
Samara
Saratov
Ural
Kurgan
İşim
Tomsk
Barnaul
Kuşmurun
Atbasar
Akmola
Bayan Aul
Karkarali
Oskemen
Turgay
Turgay Hills
Açlık Steppe
Muyunkum Desert
Kizilkum Desert
Karakum Desert
Ayagöz
Tarbagatay
Karamay
Urumçi
Balasagun
Talas
Çimkent
Taşkent
Andican
Hocend
Buhara
Semerkand
Duşanbe
Kaşgar
Yarkend
Hoten
Keriya
Çerçen
Taklamakan Desert
Chiqu Aksu
Bay Kuça
Karaşar
Kurla
Urgenç
Hive
Yesi
Cend
Sıgnak
Saraycık
Itil
Saray
Tsimliansk
Azak
Sarkel
Çariçin
Yeni Saray
Çerkassi
Harkiv
Mayatsk
Don
Ural Mts.
Ural Nehri
Ürtyurt Plain
Aral Gölü
Seyhun (Sir Derya)
Amu Derya
Balkan G.
Ili
Altay Mts
Tarım
Mongolia
Han Tengri
Zaysan G.
Oskemen
Ayagöz
Belucia
Tavan Bogd
Irtiş
Ob
Tom
Sayan Mts
Barnaul
Kaspiy Denizi
Derbent
Derbent Geçidi
Gence
Baku
Kuro
Tiflis
Elbruz
Kafkas
Alagöz
Ararat
Erzurum
Ahlat
Tebriz
Erdebil
Semender
Soçi
Kizılyar
Mangışlak
Cürcan
Nişabur
Tus
Serahs
Merv
Turan Plain
Caspian Sea
Kunduz
Belh
Gilgit
Baltistan
Sasir Kangri
Tibet Plateau
Herat
Gur
Bamyan
Kabil
Gazne
Hayber Pass
İslamabad
Kandahar
Zerenc
Keta
Lahor
Multan
Delhi
Agra
Kayaş
Satlec
Yamuna
Gang
Tar Desert
Codpûr
Haydarabad
Karaç
Lut Desert
Kirman
Bam
Taftan
Hürmüz
Persian Gulf
Suhar
Muskat
Semis
Arabian Sea
Doha
Katif
Riyad
Burayda
Hail
Tebük
Akabe
Siraz
Basra
Abadan
Küfe
Kut
Isfahan
Yezd
Nefud Desert
Dehna Desert
Rubülhali Desert
Libyan Desert
Red Sea
Nil
Medine
Mekke
Asyurt
Kina
Harga
Asvan
Cevf
Erkanu
Siva
Kahire
İskenderiye
Dimyat
Kudüs
Derne
Kandiye
Mediterranean Sea
Şam
Bağdat
Ana
Hemedan
Kum
Deşti Kebir
Deşti Lut
Kerkük
Musul
Diyarbakir
Antakya
Halep
Antalya
Demirkazık
Konya
Kayseri
Ankara
İzmir
Atina
Selanik
Olimpos
Bursa
İstanbul
Edirne
Sofya
Üsküp
Musalla
Niş
Şumnu
Silistre
Varna
Bükreş
Tulca
Çufutkale
Kefe
Kerç
Timutarakan
Sivastopol
Setkale
Akkirman
Odesa
Yaş
Bălănești
Galiç
Tisza
Dnyester
Moldovanu
Turla
Blancksea
Sinop
Samsun
Poti
Kuro
Kaçkar
Ağrı
Çoruh
Kura
Araks
Tigris
Euphrates
Fırat
Dicle
Zagros Mts.
Ana
Ararat
Elbruz
Kopet Dağ
Hindu Kuş
Cenaxale
Herirud
Hyber Pass
Gilgit
Baltistan
Sasir Kangri
Tibet Plateau
Kaşmir
Satlec
Yamuna
Gang
Tar Desert
Codpûr
Haydarabad
Karaç
Lahor
Multan
Delhi
Agra
Kandahar
Zerenc
Keta
Herat
Gur
Bamyan
Kabil
Gazne
Hyber Pass
İslamabad
Kunduz
Belh



THE TIMURID STATE

(1360-1506)

Hayrunnisa ALAN*

The founder of the Timurid State, Emir Timur Guregen, a statesman and military leader of a stature rarely witnessed in world history, who fittingly referred to himself as "Turan Sultan Timur Beg,"[1] holds an extraordinary place in both world and Turkish history. The academic and literary milieu that emerged under the patronage of the Timurid dynasty, exemplified by their productions and the scholars and artisans they supported, persisted in exerting influence in the courts of the Akkoyunlu, Karakoyunlu, and Safavid dynasties in Iran following the dynasty's decline. This cultural heritage was brought to India by Zahir-ud-din Muhammad Babur (d. 1530), the fifth-generation descendant of Timur (d. 1405), and it significantly impacted the Mughal court. Another domain of influence is evident within the Ottoman Empire via the mobility of scholars, mystics, poets, and artisans, along with the tangible transmission of scientific and artistic creations.

[1] Osman Fikri Sertkaya, "Timür Bek'in Toktamış Han'a 1391'de Yapmış Olduğu Seferin Arap ve Uygur Harfli Kitabeleri (Karsakpay Yazıtı)" *Ölümünün 600. Yılında Emir Timur ve Mirası Uluslararası Sempozyumu 26-27 Mayıs Bildiriler*, ed. A. Kara-Ö. İşbilir, Istanbul 2007, p.34.

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THE TIMURID STATE

Notwithstanding its considerable influence on Islamic, Turkish, and world history, the dominant perspective on the Timurid State is that it experienced a swift decline in power and concluded shortly following the demise of its founder, Timur. Nevertheless, a thorough analysis reveals that numerous scholarly and artistic endeavors, the scholars and artisans produced, construction projects, the renowned Samarkand Observatory, the established madrasas, and the restored structures all transpired subsequent to Timur's demise. Furthermore, the mean duration of a dynasty in world history is estimated to be 150–200 years, as noted by Ibn Khaldun, and the Timurid dynasty conforms to this interval.

It is incontestable that Emir Timur, the progenitor of the Timurid dynasty, served as the principal figure in both the dynasty's inception and the extension of its boundaries to what may be considered natural limits. The areas extending from Delhi to Moscow and from Kashgar to Istanbul experienced military campaigns directed by Timur himself, resulting in either their direct incorporation under his control or their governance by officials appointed by him, thus linking them to his authority. With this achievement, Timur was able to implement significant alterations in the political tradition throughout the Eastern and Western Turkestan areas. While the tradition of the legitimate ruler being an offspring of Genghis Khan was not entirely eliminated, it was substantially disrupted by the accomplishments of Timur. Timur sustained the appointment of puppet khans derived from the lineage of Ögedei Khan, a descendant of Genghis Khan; however, their role and position were confined to those of commanders of military units. For instance, following the demise of Sayurgatmish Khan, Mahmud Khan, designated as his successor by Timur, emerges as one of the soldiers who captured Sultan Bayezid I during the Battle of Ankara. Timur, conversely, was directing the conflict from the headquarters, occupying the role that befits a sovereign. Since 1370, he consistently attended the toy and kurultay assemblies in the capacity of the sovereign.

The Timurid mirzas who followed Timur did not perceive any necessity to formally inaugurate a khan. His grandson, Ulugh Beg (d. 1449), the sovereign of Transoxiana, maintained khans essentially as hostages in Samarkand, owing to his control over the Mongol frontier. His successors did not necessitate even this level of engagement. This is attributable to the fact that the titles Emir and Sultan, in conjunction with Islamic tradition, offered adequate and legitimate foundations for the legitimacy of the Timurid mirzas. Shahrukh (1405–1447), the son



of Timur who established Herat as his capital, was designated as hakan- ı said in historical sources. Similarly, Abu Sa'id (1405–1469), along with Sultan-ı Said and Husayn Bayqara (1469–1506), were referred to as hakan-ı mansur. The titles "khan," formerly employed by Karakhanid rulers in regions administered by the Timurids, and "sultan," utilized by Seljuk rulers, were reinstated; nevertheless, the Khaganate had diminished in grandeur compared to the era of Genghis Khan and his successors. Notwithstanding, its pragmatic utilization had not vanished. During the reign of Muhammad Shaybani Khan (d. 1510), who successfully subjugated Transoxiana by overcoming Timurid rulers and subsequently invaded Khorasan, seizing Herat and terminating Timurid supremacy in the region, the title "khan" experienced a resurgence in prominence. The Shaybanids adeptly employed the Timurid mirzas' designation "khal" as an auxiliary title and acknowledged the offspring of the khan as sultans. The individual who assumed the throne was referred to as "khan." Nonetheless, during the Timurid era, individuals from the lineages of Jochi, Chagatai, and Ögedei who did not attain the status of khan were designated as oğlan. Examples encompass Tokhtamysh Oğlan's transition to Tokhtamysh Khan upon his accession, Suyurgatmish Oğlan's enthronement by Timur as Suyurgatmish Khan, and Mahmud Oğlan's succession to his father Suyurgatmish as Mahmud Khan. While Shaybani Khan and the Genghisid khans seemed to have increased in strength, the legitimacy in this area transitioned from khanship to emirate, with the Hokand Khaganate ultimately grounding its legitimacy on Timur through the "Golden Cradle" theme.[2] Hence, Timur became the pinnacle criteria for legitimacy. All of this demonstrates that the political statecraft in the Turkistan region underwent a transformation with the Timurid dynasty.

The life and endeavours of Emir Timur, the dynasty's founder, may be regarded as extraordinary in comparison to those of other rulers known throughout history. In Islamic history, there is no other Muslim sovereign recognized for having executed military campaigns across such an expansive region and for having directly integrated those territories under his administrative control. The accomplishments of Emir Timur are equivalent in significance to those of Genghis Khan (d. 1227), whose success instigated profound alterations in Asian history and signified a crucial transition. Upon Timur's death in 1405, he had successfully subsumed the territories of the Golden Horde, the Chagatai Khaganate, and

[2] We can clearly see this in the studies on the Khokant Khaganate. See Fayzullakhon, Otakhonov, *Hokand Hanlığı Merkez Teşkilatı*, (PhD Thesis), Istanbul Medeniyet Üniversitesi Lisansüstü Eğitim Enstitüsü Tarih Anabilim Dalı, Istanbul 2023.

the Ilkhanate, which had been established by the successors of Genghis Khan. The regulation implemented in China by Kublai Khan and his successors (referred to as the Yuan Dynasty in Chinese texts) concluded in 1368 with the ascendance of the Ming dynasty, signifying the termination of the Mongol lineage in China. As is well-established, Kublai Khan, the progenitor of the Ilkhanate founded by Hülegü, and also the conqueror of southern China who established his own dynasty there, was a grandson of Genghis Khan. Mongol military campaigns persisted beyond the demise of Genghis Khan. At the time of Timur's death at the onset of his campaign against China, he had successfully asserted his authority over all territories ruled by descendants of Genghis Khan, with the notable exceptions of China and Mongolia. Such an accomplishment surpassed all other dimensions of Timur's military renown. The influence of the campaigns and the astonishment generated by his individual leadership and conquest of these regions significantly affected historians from both ancient and contemporary perspectives. This dimension was underscored in the writings of both his proponents and adversaries and persisted in the communal memory of later generations in this context. Nevertheless, the presence of smaller-scale structures, vulnerabilities, disputes, and consequent weaknesses in the regions where the campaigns occurred, indicating the absence of a force capable of challenging Timur, has frequently been neglected. In this research, while analyzing Timur's campaigns, these minor structures will be referenced, and it will be noted that there was neither a significant military force nor a developed political framework in the areas where the campaigns took place.

In the regions governed by the Golden Horde (1227–1502), the Ilkhanate (1256–1336), and the Chagatai Khaganates (1227–1335), established by the successors of Genghis Khan, the khans descended from Genghis experienced a decline in authority, while emirs employing puppet khagana assumed control of administrative functions. The conflicts among these emirs and their associated issues were apparent throughout all three Khaganates.[3] The presence of these minor entities, which are discernible during the transition from the decline of major states to the rise of new ones and are termed "tevaif-i müluk" in Islamic historiography, constitutes a significant factor contributing to Emir Timur's success as a sovereign and the founder of a dynasty. In the absence of such a context—

[3] This situation is apparent when the political history of these khanates is read. For short political histories of these three khaganates and for more information, please refer to the following works. *Avrasya'nın Se- kiz Asrı Çingizoğulları,* ed. H. Alan-İ. Kemaloğlu, Ötüken Publishers, Istanbul 2024.



that is, if substantial military forces and established political systems had been in place to oppose him—Timur would not have been able to function with such autonomy. Timur's ascent to prominence commenced within the deteriorated Khaganates, particularly in the region formerly constituting the Chagatai Khaganate.

While the political environment of the era is not explicitly characterized by the term "tevaif-i müluk" in the aforementioned sources, the political circumstances of the time align closely with this definition; within the territory of the Chagatai Khaganate, there existed emirs who exerted influence over various regions. In Kish and its affiliated territories, Emir Hacı Barlas and Timur Güregen were in power; in Khujand, Bayezid-i Jalayir held dominion; in Balkh and its adjacent regions, Emir Olcay Buga-i Sulduz maintained authority. Emir Hüseyin Karaunas and Hacı Muhammed Apardi governed Shuburgan; the sovereigns of Badakhshan presided over the Badakhshan Mountains; Keyhüsrev and Olcaytu-i Apardi controlled Huttelan and Erheng; and Emir Hızır Yasavurî held sway over Samarkand and its environs, which constituted his ancestral domain. In addition to this depiction, it is imperative to consider the contest among the khans, who were ascending in prominence within the eastern segment of the Khaganate, and their execution of campaigns aimed at subjugating the territories located west of the Syr Darya, along with their emirs, whenever such opportunities presented themselves.

Although such conditions prevailed in the Chagatai Khaganate, the circumstances in the Ilkhaganate were likewise intricate. That is, the Kartids (1245–1383) governed Khorasan with Herat as their capital, extending westward from the Zayhun River; the Sarbadars (1337–1386), located in Sabzevar, administered the western areas of Khorasan; the Togha Timurids (1336–1386), centered in Jurjan, controlled the territories of Astarabad, Bastam, Damghan, and Semnan. The Muzaffarids (1294–1393), with their capital in Shiraz, presided over Fars and Kerman; while the Jalayirids (1336–1432), based in Baghdad, exercised authority over Arab Iraq, Persian Iraq, and Azerbaijan.[4] The vestiges of the Ilkhanate's domain encompassed the Anatolian beyliks as well. This framework experienced internal dynamics, characterized by the emergence of new beyliks and the frequent alteration of territorial ownership, often transferring to adjacent beyliks following the demise of their leaders.

[4] İsmail Aka, *Timur ve Devleti*, Türk Tarih Kurumu Publishers, Ankara 1991, p.11.

As a member of the Barlas tribe ruling the Keş province, Timur, who was born in 1336, would have his youth and subsequent reign shaped in the environment described above. In addition to this political landscape, it is necessary to emphasize that the social fabric of this environment was not the same as during the time of Genghis Khan. The Barlas to which Timur belonged were not the same Barlas as those in the time of their ancestor Karaçar Noyan (d.1254). Only a population at the level of a thousand from the Barlas moved to a new geography and the century they spent there changed many things about them. This transformation is observed not only in the Barlas but also in the entire population that was part of Genghis Khan's army. The tribes, which were distributed in thousands under the command of the dynasty members to the places they conquered, also incorporated the local populations into their own structure. The victorious Mongols and the populations within them interacted with the local populations where they settled. This blending resulted in a society that was Muslim, Turkish-speaking, but bore Mongol tribal names. M. Kafalı, in his study on the Chagatai Khaganate, noted that after Genghis Khan, the Khaganate, and the nations of Jochi, Chagatai, and the Ilkhanate were established, and that the territories and populations of Jochi, Chagatai, and the Ilkhanate were located in Turkish lands. He observed that "the historical Turkish provinces known to exist until the 13th century—Uighurs, Karluks, Yaghmas, Chigils, Kipchaks, and Kangly—lost their provincial structures and were dispersed among the conquering Mongol tribes through this invasion movement."Accordingly, "Mongol tribes and Mongol military units had grown at least tenfold with the dense Turkish population.[5] The historical documents referenced by Reşiddüddin Fazlullah concerning birth and reproduction (progeny), along with the escalating population figures, and El-Ömerî's insights into the assimilation of new arrivals into the existing population of Deşt-i Kıpçak, align with the findings of the late Mustafa Kafalı. This comprehensive view can be interpreted as a response to the question of how the Golden Horde, the Ilkhanate, and the Chagatai Khaganate, which arose during the era of Mongol invasions, eventually came to be perceived as integral to Turkish history. In particular, it offers a definitive response to the inquiry regarding the ethnic identity of Emir Timur Güregen and the Timurid dynasty as either Turkish or Mongol.

5 Mustafa Kafalı, *Çağatay Hanlığı (1227-1345*), Berikan Publishers, Ankara 2005, pp.60-61.



Furthermore, discussions regarding Timur's purported noble lineage have been elucidated by research undertaken subsequent to that of Barthold.[6]

In a setting characterized by the existence of both ancient tribes (such as the Barlas, Arlat, and Dughlat) and more recent ones (such as the Karaunas and Yasavuri), as well as the presence of settled populations (such as the Turkic and Tajik groups) residing in urban areas, Emir Timur's formative years—as a member of the Barlas tribe, which upheld a semi-nomadic lifestyle in proximity to settled communities—were significantly influenced by this complex social and political structure. The campaign undertaken by the Eastern Chagatai Khan, Tughluq Timur, with the aim of dominating Transoxiana, signifies a crucial juncture in the career of Emir Timur Güregen. In 1362, Timur was designated as the commander of the tümen (division) responsible for governing Kish and its adjacent territories, the ancestral domain of his progenitors. Consequently, he officially assumed the roles of administrator and military commander. Notwithstanding his youth, he ascended to prominence amidst the power dynamics among the emirs. In augmenting his base of support through his bravery, dependability, and munificence, he concurrently illustrated that he was a significant competitor to his fellow emirs.[7] Another noteworthy milestone in his pursuit of sovereignty was his triumph over Emir Hüseyin. Emir Hüseyin, the leader of the Karaunas, was the offspring and descendant of several of the most influential emirs in Transoxiana. As the brother-in-law of Emir Timur, Emir Hüseyin endeavored to augment his authority by succeeding to his grandfather's legacy and aspired to eradicate potential competitors. Emir Hüseyin was wed to the daughter of Chagatai Khan Alauddin Tarmashirin. He endeavoured to forge a kinship relationship with the prominent Sufi family that led the Kongrats in the Khwarezm region. Emir Hüseyin's efforts to solicit the requisite funds for his marriage from Timur and his allied emirs engendered discontent among the emirate. In fact, a narrative that arose during this time would subsequently feature in Timurid sources depicting Emir

6 The publications of researchers such as Zeki Velidi Togan and Nazmiye Togan have made important contributions to the field. It has been seen that the view that Timur's ancestors mentioned in the records in Rashid al-Din Fazlullah and the works written in the Timurid court circle are not mentioned in other sources is not correct and the name of Ichil Noyan is mentioned.

7 For our study on the establishment of the Timurid dynasty three phases, see Hayrunnisa Alan, "Timurluların Kuruluşu (Orta Asya'da Hanedan İnşası ve Cengizî Geleneği Sınırlandırma)", *Hunlardan Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'ne Kuruluş,* ed. Sadullah Gülten, Timaş Publications, Istanbul 2023, pp.365-385.

Hüseyin as stingy. According to this account, Emir Hüseyin, although recognising the jewellry belonging to his sister Olcay Terken Hatun among the dowry, refrained from intervening and even used the earrings of his sister, who was married to Timur, for his own aims.[8] This story in Timurid sources emphasizes the presence of a trait of stinginess in Emir Hüseyin, a quality deemed inappropriate for a ruler. The power struggle between Timur and Emir Hüseyin, marked by divisions, alliances, and pressures, concluded in 1370 with Timur's victory over Hüseyin and his subsequent death. This victory represents another significant turning point in Timur's path to sovereignty. According to the practice whereby the defeated ruler's sovereign rights and possessions were transferred to the victor, the territories and people under Emir Hüseyin's control passed to Emir Timur. These lands corresponded to the region between the Syr Darya (Seyhun) and the Amu Darya (Ceyhun) rivers. Just before engaging in battle with Emir Hüseyin, Timur had installed Suyurgatmish Oglan, a descendant of Ögedei Khan, on the throne and declared him Khan, and also met with Seyyid Bereke shortly before the war. In this assembly, which Timurid sources characterize as the commencement of Timur's rule, Seyyid Bereke conferred upon Timur the emblems of tabl and alem. Consequently, through the defeat of Emir Hüseyin, Timur exhibited his de facto authority, and by appointing Suyurgatmish Khan, he adopted the role of administrator of the region in the Khan's name, a position previously occupied by his ancestor, Karaçar Noyan.[9] On the other hand, from the perspective of Islamic cultural tradition, by being bestowed with the Tabl and Alem[10] by Seyyid Bereke, Timur also legitimately gained the title of emir, which signifies the protector of Muslim peace and welfare. Concerning these dual legitimacy indicators, it is significant that Timur appointed a Khan from the lineage of Ögedei Khan instead of from the Chagatai Khan lineage. This observation becomes increasingly significant when examining Timur's actions in subsequent years. It is a challenge to ascertain whether this decision was made deliberately or was merely fortuitous. If a Khan from the Chagatai lineage had been appointed, Timur's actions would have been considered legitimate solely within the boundaries of the Chagatai Khaganate. Nevertheless, through the appointment of a Khan from the

8 Nizamettin Şami, *Zafername*, trans. Necati Lugal, Türk Tarih Kurumu Publishers, Ankara 1987, p.39.

9 Emir Karachar in Timurid sources

10 Şerafeddin Ali Yezdî, *Zafername*, ed. A. Urunbayev, Taşkent 1972, pp.135b-136a.



Ögedei lineage, Timur successfully legitimized all his actions across the vast domain of Genghis Khan.[11]

In the subsequent period, Emir Timur turned his attention to the Mongol incursions coming from the north, which originated from the Ulus of Jochi, and from the east, the Dughlat tribe based within the territory of the Eastern Chagatai Khaganate. The pressures from these two fronts were not new. The eastern wing of the Ulus of Jochi, known in the literature as the Golden Horde Khaganate, was led by Urus Khan and had descended upon the Syr Darya (Seyhun) tribes. The Khwarezm region, specifically the areas along the course where the Amu Darya (Ceyhun River) flows into the Aral Sea, was governed by the Sufi family of the Kongrat tribe, with the Kongrats holding the status of in-law tribe to the Khans of the Golden Horde. In order for Timur to consolidate his position, it was imperative to effectively manage these two aspects. In fact, by employing diplomatic strategies such as establishing alliances through military interventions and occasionally through marital connections, he achieved considerable success in this domain. Nonetheless, both the Mongols and participants within the Golden Horde sphere did not hesitate to launch incursions into Timur's territory whenever the occasion presented itself. While Timur's campaigns against these two fronts appear to be interconnected, the campaigns primarily aimed at the Mongols are denoted in historical sources as the "Campaigns against the Chagatai" (Çet). We observe that these campaigns commenced promptly following the defeat of Emir Hüseyin. During the years 1371, 1372, 1375, and 1376, Timur was obliged to initiate military campaigns against the Chagatai.[12] These campaigns, as previously mentioned, evolved in an interconnected manner on the northern and eastern fronts. Timur dispatched emissaries to Hüseyin Sufi, who governed the significant cities of Khiva and Kath within the Khwarezm region, imploring that these two territories be placed under the authority of the "sultan's divan," arguing that they rightfully belonged to the Chagatai Khaganate. Hüseyin Sufi responded by asserting that he had acquired the province through conquest and could similarly relinquish it through the same means. In reaction, Timur mobilized military forces and deployed them to the area. The Khwarezm campaigns initiated in this manner cul-

[11] It should be noted that Ögeday Khan was dominant over the other Jengizi Nations in this accession.

[12] For Timur's campaigns against the Jat, refer to Sevgi Doğan, *Emir Timur Dönemi Doğu Politikası*, (M.A. Thesis), Istanbul Medeniyet University, Institute of Graduate Studies, Department of History, Istanbul 2023, pp. 26–45.

minated with Timur's fourfold entry into the region between 1370 and 1379, ultimately leading to his acquisition of control. Nonetheless, prior to engaging in conflict with Toktamish, he would need to revisit the location once again. Through these campaigns in Khwarezm against the Kongrats and the Chagatai, Timur concomitantly diminished the influence of the Dughlats in Eastern Turkestan. The anticipated pressures from the Ulus of Jochi, commonly referred to as the Golden Horde throne in academic literature, were temporarily mitigated through the endorsement of Toktamish Oghlan, who sought asylum with Timur after escaping from Urus Khan, thereby facilitating his ascension to the throne. Having mitigated the threats posed by attacks from the east and north, Timur discerned an opportunity to shift his focus westward from 1380 onwards, embarking on a course toward Khorasan. As previously indicated, we catalogued the remnants of Ilkhanid constructions in the regions extending from the Syr Darya to the Mediterranean. Ultimately, no strong power structures existed throughout this entire territory. With a mixture of both military and diplomatic mastery, Timur truimphed in consolidating his control in the region.

It is noteworthy that Timur, in the correspondence he dispatched to the governor of Herat, Ghiyāth al-Dīn Pīr 'Alī, declared that all the emirs and noyans would be present at the great kurultay and that he must attend.[13] In this instance, Timur utilized a discourse that varied somewhat from that employed regarding the Khwarazm matter. In Khwarazm, he had underscored that Kat and Khiva, which were under the jurisdiction of the Chagatai Khan, fell within the sphere of influence of the Sufi dynasty, and he had appealed for their administration to be entrusted to the divan of Suyurghatmish Khan. Nevertheless, with respect to Khorasan, there is no mention of either Suyurghatmish Khan or the Chagatai Khan. Instead, the focus is placed on the Kurultay. In other words, governance was executed by the emirs and noyans, while authority resided with the kurultay, which comprised these individuals. Consequently, during the time when Timur was preoccupied with Khorasan, the prevailing social structure was conducive to highlighting the importance of the kurultay.[14] In the autumn of 782 AH (1380 CE),

[13] Şami, *Lugal*, p.81.

[14] Before Timur, the campaign of Emir Kazagan, who held power over Transoxiana, extending into Herat and its surroundings; the ruler of Herat escaping a conspiracy involving Ghurid soldiers and his own brother and taking refuge with Emir Kazagan; his return to Herat; and the Herat ruler launching raids on tribes in and around Herat, killing their leaders and building a tower from their severed heads — all these events show that the conflicts were



the campaign that initially had the aim of capturing Herat reached as far as Eastern Anatolia in 1389. Local dynasties such as the Kartids, the Muzaffarids,[15] the Togha Timurids,[16] and the Sarbadars[17] were brought under control, and Timur appointed his own administrators to the newly conquered territories. Nevertheless, specific key players of the Ilkhanid system—particularly Sultan Ahmad Jalayir and the Qara Qoyunlu, who despite acknowledging his authority—did not succumb to Timur's governance. As a result, from 1392 to 1395, Timur was compelled to launch an additional campaign in the region. He entrusted the task of suppressing these groups to his son, Mirza Mīrānshāh; nevertheless, the final stage would remain incomplete until the end of Timur's seven-year campaign in 1404. Timur's military endeavors during this period may be likened to the oscillation of a pendulum. Through participation in a series of campaigns shaped by changing conditions, fluctuating circumstances, and divergent orientations, Timur propagated his influence analogous to a ripple expanding across water. In this undertaking, he launched two campaigns against Tokhtamysh Khan, whom he had previously supported in his ascension to the throne in the northern regions of the Golden Horde. These campaigns were instrumental in reinforcing Timur's authority and reducing the prominence of the Chinggisid tradition.

Invading the Dasht-i Kipchak in 1391 and 1395 on two separate occasions, Timur targeted the eastern Dasht-i Kipchak during his initial campaign and the western sphere of the Golden Horde in his subsequent invasion, thus diminishing Tokhtamysh's authority, although he was unsuccessful in capturing him.

In 1376, Timur provided assistance to Tokhtamysh Oghlan, who had sought refuge with him, in his quest for the throne of the Golden Horde. Despite Tokhtamysh experiencing numerous defeats and subsequent returns, Timur maintained his support for him. Through the aid provided by Timur, Tokhtamysh successfully acquired dominion over the eastern region of the Golden Horde and subsequently,

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not merely between nomadic and settled peoples. They also reveal that the warrior side was not always composed of nomadic populations. For these events, see. Şerafeddin Ali Yezdi, *Zafername*, ed.. A. Urunbayev, Taşkent 1974, p.92b.

15 For the Muzaffarids, refer to Mehlika Üstündağ, *Muzafferiler*, İranyat Publications, 2018. This work is the published version of the author's M.A. thesis.

16 For the Toga Timurids, refer to Mustafa Şahin, *Son İlhanlı Toga Timur Han ve Varisleri*, İdeal Kültür Publishing, Istanbul 2023.

17 Mustafa Şahin, *Serbedârîler: Darağacının Gölgesinde Kurulan Bir Devlet*, İdeal Kültür Publishing, Istanbul 2017.

in 1381, triumphed over Emir Mamai in the western sector, thereby attaining sovereignty over the entirety of the Golden Horde. Following his consolidation of power in the Golden Horde, Tokhtamysh Khan directed his attention southward. He initiated military incursions into Tabriz and Khwarazm, regions that were at the time under the dominion of Timur. The territories that emerged as the arena for the competition for supremacy between Timur and Tokhtamysh—specifically Azerbaijan and Khwarazm—have historically been regions contested by the powers governing the Dasht-i Kipchak and those controlling Iran and Transoxiana.[18] In consideration of the geopolitical context, it becomes clear that the relationship between the two parties cannot be elucidated solely through the notions of alliance and betrayal. From Timur's viewpoint, these campaigns functioned to temporarily deter incursions from the northern regions against his own territory.

Following the campaigns against the Golden Horde, Timur shifted his attention southward and concentrated on India. It is important to recognize that the Indian campaign held considerable significance not only for the Timurids but also for the historical narrative of India. During the campaign initiated in 1399, he progressed as far as the city of Delhi. In response to distressing information from Azerbaijan, he promptly returned to Samarkand to initiate preparations for a campaign aimed at Azerbaijan. However, this campaign laid the groundwork for the extension of Timurid governance to include Delhi. Following Timur's demise, members of his lineage persisted in the region. The arrival of Zahir al-Din Babur, a sixth-generation descendant of Timur, in Kabul, signified the commencement of a significant transition for both the Timurid dynasty and Indian history.

Therefore, although this campaign was not as long as those referred to in Timurid sources as the "three-year campaign" or "five-year campaign," it could be argued that the foundations of an administration that would later have an immense impact on both Turkish and world history were laid with the Indian campaign.

One of the most critical campaigns within the context of Timur's military expeditions was his Western Asia campaign in 1402[19], during which the Battle of

[18] For Timur's campaigns against Toktamish and the question of whether Timur destroyed the Golden Horde, see. Hayrunnisa Alan, "Timur'un Toktamış Üzerine Seferleri ve Altın Orda'nın Yıkılması Meselesi", *Bilig*, 27, pp.117-143.

[19] The Battle of Ankara was analysed at a large symposium in 2012 in a multifaceted way. *1402 Ankara Savaşı Uluslararası Kongresi (Yıldırım-Timur) Bildiriler Kitabı*, ed. Mustafa Alkan Türk Tarih Kurumu Publishers, Ankara 2014.



Ankara occurred. The primary impetus for this campaign was the administrative deficiency exhibited by his son, Emirzade Miranshah, to whom Timur had conferred the "Hülagü throne" and the governorship of Azerbaijan, along with the concerning reports emanating from the region.[20] The dire nature of the situation can be inferred from the fact that Miranshah's wife, Hanzade, left her husband and went to Samarkand to inform Timur personally.[21] Reports emanating from the region led Timur to expedite his return from his campaign in India, foregoing the presence of his army. As per these reports, Miranshah had experienced a decline in his mental state following a fall from his horse, leading to the dissipation of the state's resources, and subsequently raising concerns about the potential loss of the region. Prior to arriving in Samarkand, Timur had already sent a group of seasoned emirs from the entourage of his son Shahrukh, who governed the province of Khorasan, to Azerbaijan, tasking them with an assessment of the circumstances. Hanzade's admonition to her father-in-law—asserting that without his personal intervention, Azerbaijan would be forfeited—underscores the gravity of the situation beyond simple financial impropriety. Undeniably, Timur personally ventured to Azerbaijan and established his encampment in the region of Karabakh. He once more mobilized troops to restore order among dissident factions in the area. Certain cities were acquired via diplomatic means, whereas others were seized through military strength. In this manner, Timur established his dominion over all urban centers located between Basra and the Caucasus. Hanzade's admonition to her father-in-law, that without his personal intervention, Azerbaijan would be irrevocably lost, suggests that the matter extended beyond simple financial mismanagement. In fact, Timur personally arrived in Azerbaijan and established his encampment in the Karabakh region. He once more mobilized military forces to reestablish control over dissident factions within the region. Certain cities were acquired via diplomatic means, whereas others were seized by military force. In this manner, Timur successfully subjugated all urban centers situated between Basra and the Caucasus under his governance. Consequently, due to these developments, no intermediary forces persisted between the territories of Timur and Yıldırım Bayezid, and the two powers now confronted each other directly.

[20] On Timur's first arrival in Azerbaijan after his entry into Khorasan, the general situation of the region in this period, the administration of the region to his son Miranşah and the activities of the region, see Hayrunnisa Alan, "Timurlu Dönemi", *Azerbaycan-Türkiye İlişkileri*", ed. İbrahim Tellioğlu, Türk Tarih Kurumu Publishers, Ankara 2023, pp.119-142.

[21] Yezdî, Urunbayev, pp.348a-349b.

Timur, motivated by the aspiration to unite the territories linked to the "Hülagü throne" under his governance, summoned the extant Ilkhanid successor entities to acknowledge his authority. However, Sultan Ahmad Jalayir, was engaged in activities along the Baghdad-Tabriz axis and served as the leader of the Jalayirids[22], and positioned themselves as successors to the Ilkhanids.—and Kara Yusuf of the Kara Koyunlu, who had recognized his rule, did not respond positively to Timur's call. Neither the elites that Timur had appointed to the region nor his son Miranshah were able to bring the rebellious players under their control. The fact that these elements sought refuge with Yıldırım Bayezid constituted yet another reason that eventually led to war between Timur and Bayezid. Added to this were the complaints of some Anatolian beys—whose principalities had been seized by Bayezid—who approached Timur to denounce Bayezid and requested the restoration of their former dominions. At its core, the divergence in the understanding of sovereignty between the two parties—influenced by their distinct political ideologies and manifested through the prevailing political dynamics—led to the confrontation between Timur and Bayezid on the battlefield in an event that would become historically significant as the Battle of Ankara.[23] This battle, which took place near Ankara in the plains of Çubuk (or Culuk),[24] left a ever-lasting mark on both Turkish and world history, and was a victory for Timur. The details of the battle, which began in the morning and lasted until the afternoon prayer, can be found in the *fetihname* (victory proclamation) Timur sent to Samarkand.[25] During his reign, Timur engaged in conflict with two significant armies: one commanded by Tokhtamysh and the other by Yıldırım Bayezid. Timurid sources indicate that prior to the Battle of Ankara, Timur's emirs voiced apprehensions regarding the experience of the opposing army in warfare and its success in numerous engagements, whereas their own troops were fatigued from an extensive journey, and their horses were weak and exhausted. These statements suggest that Timurid sources

[22] On the Jalayirli commanders and Hasan Bozork's founding of the Jalayids and their history and administrative structure, see Bülent Yılmaz, *Celayirliler, Kabile Devlet*, (Unpublished PhD Thesis), Atatürk Üniversitesi SBE, Tarih Anabilim Dalı, Erzurum 2002.

[23] About the causes of the Battle of Ankara, the battle, and its outcome see H. Alan, "1402 Ankara Sa- vaşı (Yıldırım Bayezid-Emir Timur Mücadelesi)", *Türkün Türkle Savaşı,* ed. M. Özkan-M. Karakulak, Kronik Publishers, Istanbul 2023, pp.202-224.

[24] For debates relating to the location of the battle see Çetin, Halil, *Timur'un Anadolu Seferi ve Ankara Sa- vaşı*, Istanbul 2009, pp.137.

[25] In relation to the victory proclamation of the Battle of Ankara see İsmail Aka, "Timur'un Ankara Savaşı (1402) Fetihna- mesi", *TTK Belgeler*, XI/15 (1981-1986), p.1-23.



recognized the efficacy of the Ottoman military forces.[26] The Battle of Ankara can be regarded as a significant historical event that imparted to Ottoman leaders and thinkers the concept of "preventing a subsequent interregnum," thereby functioning as a benchmark in the formulation of centralization policies aimed at enhancing the state apparatus. Subsequent to his victory, Timur spent the winter in Karabakh, during which time he restructured the region's administration. He transferred Azerbaijan and its dependencies, marginally augmented in scope, from Miranshah to Miranshah's son, Ömer Mirza, along with a sealed yarligh. Based on the arrival of envoys and tributes from Byzantium and Egypt, it seems that these entities also acknowledged Timur's authority. Consequently, by 1404, when Timur returned to his capital Samarkand, he had successfully established control over the territories he had delegated to his grandson, Ömer Mirza. These regions encompassed "Fars and Kirman extending to Hormuz, 'Iraq-i Ajam from Rey to Azerbaijan, as well as Arran, Mugan, Karabakh, Gilanat, Shirvan, Shamakhy, Derbent, Georgia, Abkhazia, Diyarbekir, and 'Iraq-i Arab up to the Hijaz, along with the territories of Rum reaching as far as Constantinople, and the Levant extending to Alexandria and the Nile."[27] Timur spent the winter in his capital after returning victorious, and at the beginning of the campaign he launched against Cathay, he died in Otrar in 1405.

The statement encountered in various sources indicates that during his tenure of justice and governance, in the remote areas of Transoxiana, possibly extending from the peripheries of Hatay and Hotan to the regions of Delhi, and from Babü'l-ebvab to the confines of Egypt and Rum. Not only were the merchants but also the children and widows were involved in the transportation of textiles, gold, silver, and other valuable trade commodities. It would be audacious for anyone to steal or confiscate even a single one of these items.[28] By redirecting our attention from this campaign and its associated victory narrative to the cultural and construction endeavors of the era, we are confronted with systematic structures and a vibrant cultural environment. Timur, as the progenitor of a dynasty, orchestrated military campaigns across extensive territories that were largely unclaimed by others and personally commanded his armed forces. Sim-

26 Şami, Lugal, p.303.

27 İsmail Aka, "Timur'un Ölümünden Sonra Doğu Anadolu, Azerbaycan ve Irak-ı Acem'de Hakimiyet Mücadeleleri", *Türk Kültürü Araştırmaları Prof. A. Necati Akder Armağanı*, Ankara 1984, p.50.

28 Şamî, p.10.

ilar to other successful rulers, he aimed to attract scholars and artisans from the acquired territories to his own capital. These scholars and artisans played a pivotal role in the urban and cultural advancement of his capital, Samarkand. Babur, noting that no other significant ruler aside from Timur had designated Samarkand as their capital, referenced the constructions undertaken by Timur in both Samarkand and Kesh. Similarly, the Spanish emissary Clavio, who was granted access to Timur's palace, characterized his observations with profound admiration. He indicated that Timur and his father originated from the city of Kesh, characterized by vineyards, cotton fields, melon gardens, and fruit trees, and that the urban environment featured constructions erected by Timur, further mentioning the interment of Timur's son Jahangir and his father in the same location.[29] He also mentioned the gardens, monumental buildings, and reception ceremonies in both Kesh and Samarkand. Clavio's account alone[30] is worthy of demonstrating that during Emir Timur's era that sophisticated buraucracy and advanced architectural and artistic development existed.

Upon becoming ill in Otrar, Timur dictated that his grandson, Pir Muhammad, should assume his position, and instructed the commanders to comply with his directive. Timur relieved his son Miranşah of administrative duties and conferred the territories previously governed by Miranşah to his grandson Ömer. Among Miranşah's offspring, Mirza Halil had accompanied his grandfather during the military campaign and was actively serving in the army. Timur's remaining living son, Shah Rukh Mirza, resided in Herat, whereas his grandson, Ulugh Beg, accompanied his grandfather at the military encampment. Mirza Halil's failure to respect his grandfather's will and the resolutions reached in collaboration with senior commanders and members of the dynasty at the camp, as he proceeded to capture the capital Samarkand, instigated the contest for sovereignty.[31] Shah Rukh Mirza, who governed the province of Khorasan, took over his father's capital Samarkand and replaced him. Ismail Aka, the preeminent authority of the Timurid territories, analyzed the contestations for sovereignty that ensued following Timur's demise, focusing on three primary regions. He cate-

[29] For the parts mentioning the city of Kash, see. Erol Özdemir, *Ruy Gonzalez Clavijo'nun Seyahatnamesi ve Kritiği*, (Unpublished MA Theses), İ.Ü. SBE, Istanbul 2022, pp.131- 134.

[30] For the narrative of Samarkand and their appearance before Timur, various banquets, and what they saw in the city and its surroundings, see Özdemir, *ibid*., pp.138-179.

[31] For Timur's death and subsequent events, refer to Tacü's-Selmani, *Tarihâme*, trans. İsmail Aka, Ankara, 1988.



gorized these as 1) Transoxiana-Khorasan, 2) Azerbaijan and Persian and Arab Iraq, and 3) the areas of Fars, Kirman, and Khuzistan. At the time of Timur's demise, the administration of Khorasan province was already vested in Shah Rukh Mirza; his traversal of the Jeyhun River and subsequent arrival in Samarkand effectively concluded the conflicts in Transoxiana, thereby integrating this region under Shah Rukh's governance in 1409. Shah Rukh entrusted the governance of the region to his son, Ulugh Beg. Mirza Ulugh Beg resided in his grandfather Timur's capital, Samarkand, serving as the administrator of the Transoxiana region. Kashgar continued to be under his dominion, and he served as a key figure in opposing Mongol incursions. Unquestionably, he executed all his endeavors under the preeminent authority of his father. In 1416, delegates from the Mongol heartland, headed by Naqsh Jihan, arrived and presented gifts. Shah Rukh's choice to entrust Transoxiana to his son Ulugh Beg and to return to Herat instead of residing in his father's capital indicated that Herat had emerged as the new capital of the Timurid dynasty. Nevertheless, Samarkand and Bukhara, under the governance of his son, experienced continued growth as hubs of culture and scientific advancement. Shah Rukh's selection of Herat as the capital following his accession to the throne signifies a pivotal moment in the city's historical trajectory. Following Shah Rukh, Abu Sa'id and Husayn Bayqara likewise established Herat as their capital, thereby fostering the city's evolution into a prominent center of knowledge and culture. The ascendance of Shah Rukh Mirza—denoted in Timur had designated his sons and grandsons as governors for the territories he had subjugated. Timur had entrusted the governance of Fars and Kirman to the descendants of his son Ömerşeyh. Ömerşeyh predeceased Timur and had married one of Timur's spouses, Milket Agha, to Mirza Shah Rukh. Pir Muhammad, who governed in Shiraz, agreed to the recitation of a sermon and the issuance of currency in his uncle's name and communicated this information to Shah Rukh via correspondence. Nevertheless, his siblings Rustam and Iskender had engaged in the contest for sovereignty. Shah Rukh proceeded to Shiraz, quelled the disorder resulting from the disputes among his cousins, and following the delegation of the Fars region to his son Ibrahim Mirza, he subsequently returned to Herat in 1416.[32] Consequently, the regions of Fars, Kirman, and Khuzistan were governed by Shah

[32] İsmail Aka, *Mirza Şahruh ve Zamanı (1405-1447)*, Türk Tarih Kurumu Publishers, Ankara 1994, p.103.

Rukh. What persisted were Azerbaijan and its environs, namely the territories that Timur had designated for the progeny of Miranşah.

Azerbaijan, along with the territories of Iraq-i Acem and Arab regions, persisted as challenging regions for the Timurid dynasty during the entirety of Shah Rukh's rule. Following Timur's final campaign in West Asia (1404) and the partition he implemented in Karabakh, significant alterations occurred in the region. During the conflict between Timur's grandsons, Abu Bakr and Omar Mirza, Sultan Ahmed Jalayir seized the opportunity to capture Baghdad and, accompanied by an army assembled from the Oirats and Turkmens, entered Tabriz in early July 1406. Kara Yusuf of the Karakoyunlu was an additional individual who effectively exploited the circumstances. In the two battles of 1406 and 1408, the Timurid princes not only suffered military defeat but also mourned the loss of Miranşah, who perished during the confrontations, leaving no Timurid prince present in the area.[33] Shah Rukh sought to address the Azerbaijan problem by nominating the offspring of Miranşah, thereby honoring the selections previously established by his father, Timur. He concluded an agreement with Mirza Halil Sultan, the son of Miranşah, and dispatched him along with ten thousand cavalrymen to his father's territory in Azerbaijan. Nevertheless, Halil Sultan contracted an illness in proximity to Rey and succumbed to it prior to arriving in the region (1411). Shah Rukh subsequently entrusted the city of Rey to another son of Miranşah, Mirza İcil; however, he also perished in 1415. İlengir, the offspring of Abu Bakr from the Miranşah branch, was designated in his stead.[34] The lack of a competent Timurid prince in the area and the persistent succession squabbles empowered the Karakoyunlu, affording them the chance to augment their domains of influence. Kara Yusuf of the Karakoyunlu, who governed Tabriz, aspired to extend his authority over Sultaniye, a significant commercial hub, which ultimately proved to be the decisive factor. Furthermore, the announcement of Mirza İcil's demise in Rey prompted Shah Rukh to initiate a campaign aimed at establishing control over the region.[35] Although Shah Rukh sent envoys to Kara Yusuf, the envoys reported that Kara Yusuf would not be persuaded, having fortified all castles and amassed provi-

[33] For detail on this issue see Aka İsmail, "Timur'un Ölümünden Sonra Doğu Anadolu, Azerbaycan ve Irak-ı Acem'de Hakimiyet Mücadeleleri", *Türk Kültürü Araştırmaları Prof. A. Necati Akder Armağanı*, Ankara 1984, pp.49-66.

[34] Aka, *Şahruh ve Zamanı*, p.105.

[35] Aka, *Mirza Şahruh ve Zamanı*, p.105.



sions.[36] The result of Shah Rukh's inaugural campaign against the Karakoyunlu in 1420 was influenced by the demise of Kara Yusuf. Despite exhibiting considerable resistance following the demise of their leader, the Karakoyunlu were ultimately vanquished in a conflict near Eleşkirt in 1420. Upon Shah Rukh's arrival in Sultaniye during the campaign, in opposition to the expectations and anxieties of the local community, he prohibited military looting. Shah Rukh resided in Karabakh during the winter, where he met with regional governors and envoys.[37] After reestablishing order and overcoming the Karakoyunlu, Shah Rukh conferred the governance of Azerbaijan to his sons and distinguished beys. However, according to the assertion of Devletshah, the author of the Tezkire, no one accepted the proposal due to apprehension regarding Iskender, and as a result, the Chagatai sovereign departed Azerbaijan and journeyed back to Khorasan.[38] The local rulers and elites acknowledged Shah Rukh's sovereignty, but no member of the dynasty was sent there to serve as governor. The administration of Tabriz was left to Ali Beg, son of Kara Yoluk Osman of the Akkoyunlu, who allied with the Timurids.[39] Following Shah Rukh's withdrawal from the area, Iskender, the son of Kara Yusuf and leader of the Karakoyunlu, suppressed the local administrators loyal to Shah Rukh, persisted in his operations based in Tabriz, and advanced towards Sultaniye, which was then under Timurid dominion. Despite İlyas Hoca's efforts, appointed by Shah Rukh to oversee Rey, to withstand the Turkmen incursions, Karakoyunlu Iskender successfully subdued and imprisoned İlyas Hoca's son, Yusuf Hoca, who governed regions including Sultaniye, Qazvin, and Zanjan, and also captured Sultaniye in 1428. These developments in the region compelled Shah Rukh to refocus his attention on Azerbaijan.

Mirza Shahrukh launched a second campaign against the Qara Qoyunlu in Azerbaijan and, although he won the battle fought on the plains of Salmās (17–19 September 1429), he was unable to capture Qara Qoyunlu ruler Iskandar Bey.

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36 Aka, *Mirza Şahruh ve Zamanı*, p.116.

37 For information on those who came, see Aka, *Mirza Şahruh*, p.120.

38 İsmail Aka, "Şahruh'un Kara Koyunlular Üzerine Seferleri", *Ege Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Tarih İncelemeleri Dergisi,* IV (1989), p.12.

39 Aka, *Mirza Şahruh ve Zamanı,* s.125. n. 147. For Shahrukh's first Azerbaijan campaign, see also pp.115-125; For a more recent study on the subject, see Ensar Macid, *Timurlular Za- manında Azerbaycan,* (PhD Thesis), Atatürk Üniversitesi Türkiyat Araştırmaları Enstitüsü Türk Tarihi Anabilim Dalı, Erzurum 2017, pp.184-203.

Victorious, he travelled to Karabakh to spend the winter there. During his encampment in Karabakh, Abū Saʿīd, a son of Qara Yūsuf, presented himself before Mirza Shahrukh and proclaimed his loyalty. It seems that there was conflict between him and his brother Iskandar. The Azerbaijani region was subsequently conferred upon Qara Qoyunlu Prince Abu Sa'id. During Shahrukh's tenure in Karabakh, delegations from Europe, Egypt, and Syria arrived, presenting gifts.[40] Nonetheless, these occurrences did not change the fact that authority over Azerbaijan had transferred to the Qara Qoyunlu. In fact, merely a few months thereafter, Iskandar assassinated his brother Abū Saʿīd and regained dominion over the area. As Shirvanshah Khalīlullāh, who maintained allegiance to the Timurids, and Qara Yulūq of the Aq Qoyunlu commenced incursions into neighboring regions, Shahrukh was necessitated to initiate another western campaign. It appears that Shahrukh's commanders recognized the ineffectiveness of the preceding two campaigns in yielding enduring outcomes, and anticipated that this subsequent expedition would similarly fail to produce significant changes. In actuality, the third Azerbaijan campaign exhibited characteristics that closely mirrored those of its predecessors. Upon Shahrukh's arrival in Rayy, the Qara Qoyunlu emirs approached and proclaimed their allegiance to him. Shahrukh summoned Jahānshāh, who was located in Van at the time and had previously committed his loyalty to him. Jahānshāh reacted favorably to the invitation, conveyed through the intermediation of Qara Qoyunlu commander Āqā Pīrī and Shahrukh's officers Chaqmaq and Kanāshīrīn, and appeared before Shahrukh. As an emblem of authority, Shahrukh conferred upon him a belt, a headdress, and a jeweled sword. Prior to his individual intervention in Azerbaijan, Shahrukh directed the Qara Qoyunlu emirs who had arrived at his camp to collaborate with Jahānshāh in securing control over territories formerly under Iskandar's rule. Shahrukh personally progressed through Qazvin, Soltaniyeh, Qaplān Fortress, Zanjān, Miyāneh, and Ūchān. In Ūchān, prominent figures and academics from Tabriz assembled to welcome him. In reaction to Shahrukh's strategy, Iskandar abandoned Tabriz and sought refuge in Anatolia. During his journey, he requested permission to traverse the territories of Aq Qoyunlu Kara Yulūq ʿUthmān; however, his request was refused, resulting in a significant confrontation between the two. In the subsequent conflict in the vicinity of Erzurum, Aq Qoyunlu Kara Yulūq ʿUthmān perished. When the Chaghatay forces led by

[40] Aka, *Mirza Şahruh ve Zamanı*, pp.140-143. For the repercussions of this expedition in the Middle East see pp.144- 145.



Mirza Jūkī were dispatched to pursue upon arriving at the battlefield, Iskandar and his companions were deeply appalled by the sight of the deceased, which extended over an entire farsakh.[41] Despite Mirza Jūkī's pursuit of Iskandar to the vicinity of Aksaray, he failed to apprehend him and subsequently rejoined his father, who was residing in Karabakh for the winter. During his winter residency, Shahrukh reinforced his authority and obtained the loyalty of regional leaders. Upon learning of an assault by the Uzbek Abū'l-Khayr Khān, who had ventured from the Dasht area toward Khwārazm, Shahrukh issued a directive to retreat. He delegated the administration of Azerbaijan to Qara Qoyunlu Jahānshāh, bestowing upon him the āl tamghalı symbol of authority. Jahānshāh orchestrated elaborate banquets and bestowed presents, whereas Shahrukh reciprocated by providing horses, gold-embroidered saddles, apparel, belts, and headdresses to him and his associates. He directed him to uphold justice, to endeavour for the advancement of the nation, and to exhibit reverence for the populace and their religious practices, prior to commanding his return to Khurāsān in 1436.[42]

As can be observed, Shahrukh Mirza, much like his father Timur, was compelled to undertake multiple campaigns in certain regions. Whenever a campaign was launched in a territory, order would initially be established; however, upon his withdrawal, those who had submitted would often renege on their loyalty, internal conflicts would immediately erupt, and as cases of abuse, lawlessness, and complaints increased, essentially, when the situation spiraled out of control, a new campaign would become necessary to restore order. This pattern can be seen on nearly every front throughout Shahrukh's reign. The same occurred in the Qara Qoyunlu affair, in the events involving his cousins in the Fars region, and in the south near Kabul. As a result of these efforts, the territories conquered by Timur remained loyal to the Timurids during Shahrukh's reign as well. The extent of his dominion is described in the Tezkire of Dawlatshah Samarqandī as follows: "The banner of his empire flew for fifty years. He brought prosperity to the Islamic lands. His rule extended from Khotan and Kashgar to the Dasht-i Qipchāq and the Indian lands, from Māzandarān to Derbend and the

41 Aka, *Mirza Şahruh ve Zamanı*, pp.154-155.

42 Aka, *Mirza Şahruh ve Zamanı*, p.157. On Shahrukh's campaigns in Azerbaijan see. Ensar Macit, *op.cit*.,. For the second campaign see pp.203-120; for the third campaign see pp.210-22.

Georgian country, and from Fars to Basra and Wāsiṭ."[43] Governing such an extensive territory, which largely aligned with the areas in which Timur had conducted his campaigns, and sustaining control over it constitutes a considerable achievement in its own right. Dawlatshah additionally observes, referencing the historian Mawlānā Fāḍil Jardeh, that "In Shahrukh's court, there assembled three hundred princes comprising his offspring, descendants, relatives, and members of his clan, all of whom demonstrated the requisite merit and capability to succeed to the throne."[44] The capacity of a ruler governing such a vast territory, amidst numerous potential claimants to the throne, along with local governors, tribal chieftains, and diverse religious groups, both adhering to and deviating from Sunni orthodoxy, to maintain the unity of all these elements is notably commendable. Sources from the era occasionally highlight that Shahrukh exercised compassion and justice in his military campaigns as well as in judicial matters. Examples include the mercy he showed when defeated the Qara Qoyunlu at Eleşkirt, his refusal to commit a massacre, and the mild punishment he imposed on his rebellious cousin, which consisted of only banishinh him to a different region. Such actions and his noble conduct, as well as his visits to the tombs of saints during campaigns and his respectful treatment of scholars and religious figures,[45] went a long way in forming his incredible reputation. However, it is also known that he employed greater caution in situations that posed a threat to public order.[46] Throughout his reign, which exceeded forty years, he successfully maintained the legacy of his father's conquests—occasionally through military endeavors and at other times via diplomatic adaptability.

Throughout Shahrukh's extended rule, members of the dynasty—especially his sons who functioned as regional governors, including Ulugh Beg, Ibrahim, and Baysunghur Mirza—along with high-ranking emirs, were involved in architectural advancements and cultural initiatives.[47] Subsequent to a campaign in 1425 aimed at countering Mongol incursions into Transoxiana, in

[43] Devletşah Tezkiresi, *Tezkire-I Devletşah III*, trans. Necati Lugal, Tercüman 1001 Eser İstanbul 1977, pp 402-403.

[44] Devletşah, *Tezkire,* p.403.

[45] For information about his faith see Musa Şamil Yüksel, *Timurlularda Din-Devlet İlişkisi*, Türk Tarih Kurumu Publishers, Ankara 2009, pp.29-32.

[46] Beatrice F. Manz, *Timurlu İran'ında İktidar, Siyaset ve Din*, trans. Dilek Şendil, Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Publications, Istanbul 2013 pp.286 and others.

[47] Glombek, L-D. Wilber, *Timurid Artchiture of İran and Turan*, I-II, Princeton 1988.



which Shahrukh also partook, Ulugh Beg dedicated the majority of his efforts to scholarly pursuits and abstained from engaging in additional military expeditions. His prolonged administration of the Transoxiana region, benefiting from his father's significant patronage, holds more importance for the history of science than for political history, as he cultivated a conducive environment for the advancement of mathematics and astronomy, thereby achieving recognition as a scholarly ruler.[48] As an esteemed scientist, Ulugh Beg took an active role in the scientific endeavors that led to the compilation of the Zīj-i Ulugh Beg, an astronomical table also known by his name. This research was conducted at the observatory established by Ulugh Beg in Samarkand, where he collaborated with notable figures in the history of science, including Ali Qushji, Ghiyāth al-Dīn al-Kāshī, and Qāḍīzādeh al-Rūmī, the last of whom hailed from Bursa. The *Zīj-i Ulugh Beg*[49] persisted as a fundamental text within the Ottoman Empire until approximately 1800. A multitude of commentaries, simplifications, adaptations, and translations were produced to enhance the pragmatic utilization of calendar information.[50]

Shahrukh's second son, Baysunghur Mirza, converted his dwelling in the Bāgh-i Safīd district of Herat into an institution akin to an academy. A proficient calligrapher and poet, this prince acted as a benefactor for literary figures, musicians, illuminators, calligraphers, and painters. He also served as emir in the Dīvān-i 'Alā, and as reported by Dawlatshāh Samarqandī, he possessed an annual income of 600 kepeki tūmāns.[51] It is probable that he utilized these financial resources to sustain his vast network of patronage. Another of Shahrukh's sons, Mirza Ibrahim, who was designated governor of the Fars region with its capital in Shiraz, possessed a keen interest in history and literature, and also en-

48 Sayılı, Aydın, *Uluğ Bey ve Semerkanddaki İlim Faaliyeti Hakkında Gıyasüddin-i Kaşi'nin Mektubu*, Ankara 1985. The milieu of science around Ulug Beg in Samarkand, the way the lectures were conducted, the fact that the ruler himself was a great scholar and that no one in his court was pedantic, can be deduced from Jamshid Kashi's letter. This scholar wrote the letter to his father and described the environment in Samarkand and his own situation in a sincere manner.

49 *Zic-i Uluğ Bey I-II*, trans. M. Kaçar-A. Bir, Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı Publications, Ankara 2012.

50 Cevat İzgi, *Osmanlı Medreselerinde İlim*, I, p.413: for an anecdote about a copy bought for 12 thousand dinars in the capital Herat and another copy bought by an Algerian pilgrim and taken to his homeland p.416.

51 Devletşah Semerkandi, p.420.

gaged in various architectural and construction endeavours.[52] Shahrukh's reign can be described as an era of comparative tranquility that ensued after extensive and lucrative military endeavors. The requisite financial resources and political stability essential for the advancement of science and the arts converged during his reign. Scholars and artists hailing from diverse areas of the Timurid empire discovered not only the opportunity to create remarkable works in their respective disciplines within Timurid cultural hubs but also the chance to mentor students and successors. Furthermore, during this period, the function of patrons of science and the arts extended beyond Shahrukh's sons; numerous high-ranking emirs and even the ruler's consorts were actively involved as patrons, especially in the realm of architecture.

Of Shahrukh's sons, Baysunghur, Ibrahim, and Muhammad Juki all passed away before their father. The territories and responsibilities formerly allocated to them were, to the extent feasible, transferred to their sons. One of Baysunghur's sons, Ala al-Dawla, was designated to succeed his father. He was also regarded as the preferred grandson by his grandmother Gawhar Shad, a position that incited animosity among other mirzas. Gawhar Shad, who is notably more engaged in administrative affairs than both Shahrukh's other consorts and the broader population of Timurid noblewomen, derived her influence partially from her robust personality and perhaps to a greater extent from her brothers, who held positions as powerful amirs in alliance with Shahrukh. Under Gawhar Shad's influence, another son of Baysunghur, Mirza Muhammad, was effectively marginalized from the center of power and relegated to the challenging region of Iraq-i Ajam during Shahrukh's rule. The youthful mirza, characterized by a robust and energetic disposition, successfully exerted control over this problematic region. Mirza Muhammad b. Baysunghur b. Shahrukh, possibly cognizant of his grandfather's advanced age and mindful of his grandmother's preferences and political strategies in Herat that were not advantageous to him, initiated independent actions, expanding his authority beyond its established boundaries. Although there may have been justifiable reasons for his actions, Mirza Muhammad's rebellion compelled Shahrukh to launch a military offensive against him. Shahrukh perished in Ray in 1447 amidst this campaign. Prior to his departure, he had entrusted the capital city of Herat to his grandson,

[52] J. Aubin, "Timurlular'ın Şiraz'da Bilim ve Sanat Koruyuculuğu", trans. Yaşar Yücel, *Belleten*, LI/ 200 (Ankara 1987), pp.965-979.



Ala al-Dawla b. Baysunghur, who had been mentored and endorsed by Gawhar Shad as a potential successor to the throne. This signified that both the royal treasury and the capital were subject to Ala al-Dawla's authority. Ulugh Beg's son, Abd al-Latif, was present in the military camp accompanying his grandfather. At the time of Shahrukh's demise, Ulugh Beg stood as his only surviving offspring. Nevertheless, each mirza of the dynasty possessed a valid claim to the throne, and the grandsons exhibited no reluctance in engaging in the contest for power, notwithstanding the existence of Shahrukh's son. Although this system, in which each prince possessed a claim to sovereignty, may seem disordered, it can also be interpreted as a manifestation of adaptability—illustrating the impact of wider societal needs and preferences on governance through dynastic individuals. A renewed power struggle emerged among the princes who considered themselves legally qualified and militarily proficient to ascend to the throne. Among the leading aspirants were Baysunghur's three sons—Ala al-Dawla, Muhammad, and Abu'l-Qasim Babur—along with Ulugh Beg's son, Abd al-Latif. Ulugh Beg, as the sole surviving son of the deceased ruler, regarded the throne as his legitimate inheritance and anticipated acknowledgement of this claim from the other princes. Nevertheless, the circumstances did not develop in accordance with his expectations. As the succession dispute escalated among the mirzas, Ulugh Beg journeyed to Herat; however, events in Samarkand necessitated his return. In taking this action, he rendered Abd al-Latif, who had diligently advocated for his father's rights in Herat for an extended period, susceptible to the aggressions of his cousins. It seems that although Ulugh Beg excelled in scientific pursuits, he was considerably less skilled in the domain of politics. Several factors contributed to the estrangement between him and his son Abd al-Latif: the objectionable conduct of his other son, Abd al-Aziz, in Samarkand, which alienated the public; the attribution of Abd al-Latif's military achievements to Abd al-Aziz; and, most significantly, the revelation of a letter indicating Ulugh Beg's support for a rival mirza who had rebelled against Abd al-Latif. Once more, it became apparent that sovereign authority is inherently indivisible. Abd al-Latif, while not demonstrated to have explicitly commanded it, permitted the assassination of his father—a distinguished scholar and sovereign renowned for his expertise in mathematics and astronomy, which would ultimately lead to the recognition of having a lunar crater named in his honor. Ulugh Beg consequently met his demise in 1449. Abd al-Latif, now labeled as a patricide, was subsequently assassinated only six months

thereafter. Thus, both Ulugh Beg and his son were eliminated from the power equation in the Mavarannahr region centered on Samarkand. To the west of the Oxus (Amu Darya), the struggle among the sons of Mirza Baysunghur continued. In 1451, Mirza Muhammad lost the contest to his brother Abu'l-Qasim Babur. When he was brought before his brother after losing a battle in which no blood other than his own was shed, he remarked that such things were part of princely affairs—an indication that even the contestants had come to accept the harsh realities of dynastic politics. Consequently, one of the contenders for the throne, Mirza Muhammad, also perished. Nevertheless, his demise resulted in the enhanced power and territorial growth of the Qara Qoyunlu at the detriment of the Timurids. Abu'l-Qasim Babur, having failed to establish dominance over the regions formerly administered by his brother, shifted his focus towards Transoxiana. Subsequent to the demise of Ulugh Beg and Abd al-Latif, a new individual rose to prominence in the region—Mirza Abu Sa'id from the Miran Shah branch, a grandson of Timur through his son Miran Shah. After a period in concealment among the Argun tribe near Yasi, Abu Sa'id obtained the backing of the Uzbek Khan Abu'l-Khayr and successfully captured Samarkand in 1451. In a strategic political maneuver, he arrived in the city prior to the Khan's forces, directed the closure of the gates, and dispatched gifts to the Khan along with a courteous request for his return to his own territories. Through this means, Abu Sa'id established dominance over Transoxiana, which led to a direct conflict with Abu'l-Qasim Babur b. Baysunghur, a grandson of Shahrukh who had obtained control over Khorasan. Notwithstanding Babur's aspirations, he was unsuccessful in seizing Samarkand, as Abu Sa'id orchestrated a robust defense aided by the significant backing of the Sufi sheikh Ubaydullah Ahrar. Ultimately, the two princes reached an agreement to establish the Oxus (Amu Darya) River as the boundary, whereupon Babur retreated to Herat. Subsequent to Babur's demise, hostilities re-emerged in Khorasan and persisted until Abu Sa'id successfully seized control of Herat. Consequently, the years from 1447 to 1458 were marked by significant and vigorous contentions for the Timurid throne. The primary beneficiary of this upheaval was the Qara Qoyunlu. Their leader, Jahan Shah, progressed to the Timurid capital of Herat and successfully seized the city. However, reports of çivil unrest in his home country of Azerbaijan, together with the progress the of Timurid prince Abu Sa'id Mirza from



Transoxiana into Khorasan with the aim of taking Herat, prompted Jahan Shah to reach an agreement and withdraw.[53]

Sultan Abu Sa'id (1451–1469) represented the final Timurid monarch who successfully unified Khorasan and Transoxiana under a singular administration following the reign of Shahrukh. In contrast to Shahrukh's sons and grandsons, Abu Sa'id had not previously governed any particular territory. Consequently, his participation in the contest for power and subsequent achievement merit significant attention. Within the extensive continuity of Turkish history, the recurring phenomenon observed in the establishment of dynasties and succession conflicts within the same ruling family is manifest in the ascension of Abu Sa'id to the throne. As a mirza devoid of advantages beyond his noble ancestry, he obtained the requisite military assistance from the Argun tribe, with whom he had resided for a considerable period, as well as from Ubaydullah Ahrar, who exerted influence over the settled populace. Utilizing this fundamental strength, he contested against fellow dynastic members and emirs who aimed to capitalize on the circumstances. The assassination of thirteen mirzas who were considered potential heirs to the throne was an extraordinary occurrence. He dispatched Yunus Khan as a puppet khan to the Mongol territories to deter their incursion into Timurid domains, and augmented his influence over the region between the Aral and Caspian Seas by sending an envoy—accompanied by an emir, whose presence signified the potential for military intervention should they decline to remit taxes as previously agreed—to the Jalayirids in Mingishlak. After establishing supremacy over the Nekudari and Hazara tribes, the province of Nimruz similarly recognized the authority of the Timurids. Only the regions of Iraq-i Ajam and Azerbaijan persisted. Following the demise of Kara Koyunlu ruler Jahan Shah in 1467, Abu Sa'id confronted the Aq Qoyunlu leader Uzun Hasan, who had emerged as a significant power in the area. Ultimately, absent a significant confrontation in Azerbaijan, Abu Sa'id was apprehended by Uzun Hasan and executed in 1469, purportedly in reprisal for the prior execution of Shahrukh's consort, Gawharshad. He perished significantly distant from his primary base of authority, exhausted by minor conflicts instead of a conclusive war. Throughout the campaign, none of the sons he had designated as regional

[53] For the events relating to the period of Ebu Said see: Hayrunnisa Alan, *Sultan Ebu Said Devri Timurlu Tarihi (1451-1469)*, (PhD Thesis), MSGSÜ SBE, Istanbul 1996; For information about Cihanşah and the Karakoyunlu, see. İsmail Aka, *Türkmen Hâkimiyeti (Kara Koyunlular Devri)*, Ankara 2001.

governors provided assistance, nor did his administrators undertake any efforts to intervene. This phenomenon can be attributed not only to the officials' inclination towards a weak sovereign but also to the circumstance that Abu Sa'id had traversed regions beyond Timurid dominion for almost two decades, including Azerbaijan, which had remained independent of Timurid governance since the demise of his great-grandfather Miran Shah in 1408. Following his demise, Khorasan and Transoxiana were partitioned among the Timurid princes and remained disunified thereafter. During the period when Abu Sa'id's sons—Sultan Ahmad Mirza, 'Umar Shaykh Mirza, and Mirza Mahmud—governed in Transoxiana, the administration of Khorasan was conferred upon Husayn Bayqara.

Hüseyin Baykara, who came into the world in Herat in 1438, originated from the line of Ömer Şeyh, son of Timur. His lineage is Hüseyin b. Gıyaseddin Mansur b. Emirzade Baykara b. Ömer Şeyh Bahadır b. Emir Timur Güregen. Hondmir emphasizes that he descended from the Sahipkıran lineage both maternally and paternally.[54] Following the death of Mirza Şahruh, Hüseyin Baykara was in the retinue of Mirza Ebu'l-Kasım Bâbür, who appointed him a suitable position. When Ebu'l-Kasım Bâbür turned toward Samarkand, Hüseyin Baykara accompanied him and then aligned himself with Ebu Said. However, fearing the onset of a struggle for the throne, Ebu Said imprisoned thirteen members of the Timur lineage in Samarkand, including Hüseyin Baykara. It was Hüseyin Baykara's mother, Firuze Begüm's initiative, that saved his life. He crossed the Amu Darya and joined Ebu'l Kasım Bâbür (1455). The subsequent years, marked by his governance of Merv, the rupture with his father-in-law Mirza Sencer that forced him to flee Merv toward Khwarezm, the capture of Esterabad, an agreement with Ebu Said followed by its breach, his period as a Kazak in the Khwarezm deserts, and his raids on Khorasan, culminated in his capture of Herat in 1469.[55] Capitalising on Ebu Said's campaign in Azerbaijan, Hüseyin Baykara once again moved to seize Herat, his birthplace and the capital of the Timurid state. The city initially resisted, but upon news of Ebu Said's death, Herat's gates were opened to him. Consequently, a new epoch commenced in the annals of the Timurid state as well as in the life of Hüseyin Baykara. Acquiring entry into the capital proved to be more challenging than

[54] Hondmir, *Habibü's-Siyer*, published by Debirsiyaki, Tahran 1342, p.113.

[55] Hüseyin Baykara'nın bu süreci için bk. Hayrunnisa Alan, *Bozkırdan Cennet Bahçesine Timurlular (1360-1506)*, Ötüken Neşriyat, Istanbul 2020, pp.227-238.



sustaining authority therein, as he was required to assert his dominance over competing claimants from the dynasty and to institute order. The first challenge was the arrival in Herat of a group of Turkmen soldiers alongside the Timurid mirza Yadigâr Muhammed b. Muhammed b. Baysungur b. Şahruh, who then took the throne. Yadigâr Muhammed's father was Muhammed Mirza, grandson of Mirza Şahruh, and his mother was the daughter of Karakoyunlu Cihan Shah.[56] When Mirza Sultan Abu Said was apprehended in 1469 and presented to Akkoyunlu Uzun Hasan, this mirza was also in attendance at Uzun Hasan's court. As a consequence of his indirect culpability in instructing the assassination of Gevherşad, Ebu Said's grandmother, a judgment was rendered that resulted in his demise. Hasan Bey dispatched Yadigâr Muhammed to Herat accompanied by a force of Turkmen soldiers to claim the throne of his grandfather. Hüseyin Baykara did not possess the strength to oppose them and was compelled to abandon the city. The Friday sermon (khutbah) was delivered in the name of Yadigâr Muhammed on 6 Muharram 875 / 5 July 1470. Residing in Bağ-ı Zegân, Yadigâr Muhammed's proclivity for habitual drinking and engaging in revelry resulted in disorder. The adherents of Hüseyin Baykara effectively capitalized on this vulnerability. Ali Şir Nevai, who remained steadfast in his support of Hüseyin Baykara throughout his rule, personally orchestrated an expedition and apprehended the inebriated Yadigâr Muhammed. The Turkmen were in a position of weakness, and the city was unequivocally brought under the authority of Hüseyin Baykara, with the khutbah in Herat being once more delivered in his name.

As Sultan Abu Said initiated his campaign in Azerbaijan, he dispatched his son, Mirza Khalil Sultan, whom he entrusted with the governance of the capital Herat, to Samarkand in 875/1470. When this mirza revolted in that region, he was ultimately slain by the forces of his elder brother, Sultan Ahmed Mirza. Hüseyin Baykara, who engaged in conflict with another son of Ebu Said, Sultan Mahmut Mirza, regarding the administration of Balkh, successfully vanquished him. Devletşah documents the occurrence in the Semerkandî Tezkire, affirming, "I accompanied Hüseyin Baykara and personally observed the conflict." Hüseyin Baykara seized Balkh, subsequently appointing Ahmet Müştak, a commander from Iraq, to administer the region, prior to his return to Herat

[56] For the theory that Yadigar Muhammad was born to the daughter of Karakoyunlu Jahan Shah, see H. Alan, *Bozkırdan Cennet Bahçesine Timurlular*, p.124, no. 64.

in July 1471.[57] Nonetheless, as a result of Ahmet Müştak's insurrection, Hüseyin Baykara once again advanced upon Balkh; subsequently, with Müştak's appeal for forgiveness, Balkh was restored to Hüseyin Baykara's authority in 1473.[58] Mirza Sultan Murad served as the governor of Germsir and Kandahar during the reign of his father, Ebu Said. During his journey to Kirman under his father's directive, he was informed of his father's defeat and subsequent demise. He returned to his native province, Germsir. Adjacent to the banks of the Helmand River, he was attacked by Emir Yusuf Tarhan and subsequently arrived in Herat. Hüseyin Baykara accorded him favorable treatment and dispatched him to his brothers in Samarkand; nevertheless, owing to suspicions regarding the demeanor of his escorts, he opted to return to Khorasan. Consequently, Hüseyin Baykara ordered his apprehension and incarceration at Tiretu Castle (1475), where he purportedly perished. Ebu Said's offspring, Mirza Ebu Bekir, similarly held the position of governor. Despite initially establishing amicable relations with Hüseyin Baykara, he subsequently developed an adversarial stance against him. He was apprehended by Hüseyin Baykara in September 1479 and was subjected to political execution. Two of the former Sultan Ebu Said's sons, Mirza Sultan Muhammad and Mirza Shahruh, accompanied their father on military campaigns. Following a period of incarceration in several Azerbaijani fortresses, they managed to escape and endeavored to journey to Herat. Sultan Muhammad passed away shortly after arriving in the Sari province. Hüseyin Baykara facilitated the transportation of the body to Herat and its interment within the Gevhershad Madrasa (1484). Subsequently, Mirza Shahruh passed away.[59] Consequently, Ebu Said's sons relinquished aspirations regarding Khorasan, while the Timurid throne was divided between Transoxiana and Khorasan, with no subsequent reunification. Hüseyin Baykara established his authority in Khorasan and eradicated the progeny of the previous sultan. Nevertheless, his initiatives to offer opportunities and means of sustenance to the remaining members of the royal family and emirs from the forfeited territories engendered issues concerning the distribution of a diminishing power base. Emirs and administrators pursuing concessions, corrupt viziers, and even his own offspring presented challenges for Hüseyin Baykara. His son, Bediüzzaman Mirza, serving as governor of Esterabad, anticipated that his ancestral

[57] Devletşah Semerkandî, *Tezkire-i Devletşah IV*, trans. N. Lugal, Istanbul 1976, p.608.

[58] Devletşah, *Tezkire*, p.610.

[59] *Habibü's Siyer*, IV, p.101.



province would be transferred to his son upon his own appointment as governor of Balkh. Nevertheless, the sovereign designated his alternative son, Muhammad Hüseyin, for the role. Bediüzzaman advanced towards Herat; however, he was unsuccessful in his confrontation with his father. Subsequently, he engaged in another rebellion. Ali Shir Nevai, who had been in close proximity to Hüseyin Baykara since the commencement of his reign and had significantly influenced their era, also provided support to the ruler in this regard. He convinced the prince to refrain from deploying troops against his father; however, it was agreed that Bediüzzaman's name would be acknowledged in the khutbah in Herat. Moreover, the regions extending from the Amu Darya to the Murgab were entrusted to Bediüzzaman. In 1500, Hüseyin Baykara once more encountered difficulties with his rebellious son, Muhammad Hüseyin. Meanwhile, in Transoxiana, the demise of Ebu Said's sons and the progression of the Uzbeks led by Muhammad Shaybani persisted. In a context where emirs lacked trust in mirzas and in one another, resulting in a failure to coalesce against Uzbek incursions, the Uzbeks laid siege to Balkh in 1506. Following the capture of Balkh, Shaybani Khan proceeded towards Herat. In response to this information, Bediüzzaman Mirza was dispatched to establish a defensive perimeter along the Murgab River, while Hüseyin Baykara travelled alone. Nevertheless, upon arriving at Baba Ilahi, he became ill and passed away on May 5, 1506.[60] With the death of Hüseyin Baykara, and shortly before that the death of Ali Shir Nevai, this poet and scholar, the reign of Hüseyin Baykara effectively came to an end.

The period of Hüseyin Baykara was marked by an intensive period of laying the foundations of the infrastructure in Herat and its surroundings[61], as well as literary production reaching its peak. An important figure who left a lasting impression on the era was without doubt Ali Shir Nevai[62], the great poet, statesman, and patron highly esteemed by the ruler. This eminent figure in Turkish literature allocated a substantial portion of his wealth to construction initiatives. In addition to his literary contributions, the structures and philanthropic organizations he established are also significant. In the Devletshah Samarkandi Tez-

60 *Habibü's Siyer*, IV, pp.318-319.

61 Ertuğrul Ökten, Câmî ve Meclis: Timurlu Ortamında Bir İnceleme", *Zemin*, 3 (2022), pp.162- 185.

62 As a new voluminous publication about this great writer, patron, statesman, about whom many studies have been carried out both at home and abroad, see Vahit Türk, *Türklüğün Kutup Yıldızı Ali Şir Nevâyî,* Türk Kültürüne Hizmet Vakfı, Istanbul 2023.

kire, Ali Shir Nevai's philanthropic activities are delineated, and the endeavor to transport water over a distance of ten farsakhs (roughly 55 km) to alleviate the water scarcity in Mashhad is depicted with significant commendation.[63]

The significance of the Timurid period in cultural and civilizational history becomes increasingly elucidated as additional research is undertaken. The perception of the dynasty, quickly founded and equally swiftly dismantled by Timur's campaigns, is undergoing a transformation. As extensive research on construction activities advances, the significance of architectural endeavors during the Timurid period is disclosed.[64] Certainly, these endeavors extended beyond the confines of the late Timurid era. Conversely, the Timurid palace and its elite served as more than mere patrons of construction initiatives. The artistic practices associated with book production, including calligraphy, illumination, bookbinding, and miniature painting, received significant patronage. The exhibition catalog[65] encompasses extant examples, alone provides satisfactory illustrations in this regard. The Arzadaşt tmanuscript a source on works carried out under the patronage of Baysungur Mirza, son of Mirza Shahruh, illustrates the types of works and which artisans and craftsmen were comissioned to produce.[66]

When examining the Timurid dynasty rulers' fundamental characteristics and their position in world history, the reign of the state's founder Timur (1370–1405), who expanded the empire to its greatest extent, stands out for its visible military victories and campaigns. Although architectural and construction activities were organized and systematic during his rule, Timur's unique image in world history largely stems from personally leading extensive military expeditions over vast territories, which tends to overshadow these other accomplishments. During Shahrukh's reign (1405–1447), although military campaigns and a standing military presence were maintained, the aforementioned military

63 Devletşah Semerkandi, *Tezkire* IV, s.581. For the description of Ali Shir Navoi's charity, see. pp.579- 581.

64 For detail about the architectural features of different buildings used for varying purposes such as places used by the dynasty, dams, irrigation canals, baths, market bridges, caravans, hospitals, mosques, madrasahs, khanqahs, etc., please see Bernard O'Kane, *Timurid Architecture in Khurasan*, (PhD Thesis), Uni-versity of Edinburgh, 1982.

65 See for example, Thomas W. Lentz-G. D. Lowry, *Timur and The Princely Vision Persian Art and Culture in the Fifteenth Century*, Los Angeles 1989.

66 Özergin, M. K., "Temürlü Sanatına Ait Eski Bir Belge: Tebrizli Cafer'in Bir Arzı", *İÜEF Sanat Tarihi Yıllığı,* VI (1976), pp.471-518.



prominence characteristic of Timur's era did not dominate. Instead, the construction activities[67], supported by members of the royal family and emirs under Shahrukh's administration, attracted significant attention. During the extended reign of Mirza Shahrukh, the governance of state matters was overseen by a resolute and benevolent sovereign. Prominent members of the dynasty and administrators served as patrons of science and the arts, actively fostering the advancement of cultural life—and they achieved notable success in these efforts. Similar to all exemplary leaders, Timur assembled eminent figures from diverse disciplines at his nucleus to advance and fortify his capital. Academics and artists from various global regions converged in the Timurid capital, where they showcased their skills and mentored emerging scholars and craftsmen. The stable and prosperous conditions essential for this cultural development commenced under the leadership of Timur and persisted throughout Shahrukh's reign. Of particular significance during Shahrukh's reign were the endeavors facilitated by the patronage of his sons, which included the training of scholars and masters as well as the production of scholarly works. These works disseminated to additional regions through diverse methods, functioning as notable models that impacted later periods. Mirza Baysungur, for example, had converted his residence in Herat into a veritable academy of fine arts and was accomplished in the art of calligraphy. Mirza Ibrahim Sultan was recognized as an individual with a keen interest in history and literature who earnestly endeavored to advance his region of Shiraz. Another offspring of Shahrukh, Ulugh Beg, immersed himself in the study of mathematics and astronomy in Samarkand, where he established an observatory and produced the renowned Zij catalog. The madrasas established in Samarkand and Bukhara during this era were still functioning as late as the twentieth century.[68] The era of Ebu Said is significant due to the emergence of a mirza lacking a pre-existing administrative foundation, a devoted military, and a regional governorship, who nonetheless succeeded in attaining the throne through the adept manipulation of social dynamics. His endeavors to enhance agricultural practices have garnered significant attention. Ebu Said sought to reinstate the territorial boundaries established during the Timurid period and may be considered to have achieved partial success in maintaining the unity of Maverannahr and Khorasan. Moreover, his era was characterized by socio-po-

[67] Glombek, L-Wilber, D., *Timurid Architecture of Iran and Turan*, I-II, Princeton 1988.

[68] Dilmuro Mamarasulov, "Semerkant'taki Mirza Uluğ Bey Medresesinin Son Öğrencileri Hakkında", *Yeni Türkiye,* 126 [Özbekistan Özel Sayısı II), Ankara 2022, pp.278-283.

litical transformations exemplified by the emergence of Sufi personalities such as Ubaydullah Ahrar.[69] The respect given to scholars, sayyids, ulema, and poets, as well as the rulers' desire to keep these groups close, were characteristics common to all Timurid rulers; however, the period of Sultan Abu Sa'id stands out particularly in terms of the degree to which religious groups were directly involved in politics. The era of Hüseyin Baykara, conversely, is characterized by political and military fragmentation, recognized as a period during which the state was bifurcated into Khurasan and Transoxiana. Authority transitioned from the sovereign to the emirs functioning as provincial governors in the outlying regions. These emirs possessed the capacity to impact members of the dynasty and occasionally diminished the ruler's authority by arranging for the khutbah to be delivered in the name of various individuals. Whether they were the offspring of Abu Sa'id or the progeny of Hüseyin Baykara, a review of political histories elucidates this dynamic in the conduct of the emirs encircling the mirzas. Notwithstanding the reduction in territorial control during Hüseyin Baykara's rule, the era was characterized by significant literary output.[70] The assemblies and literati of Hüseyin Baykara's era exhibited a remarkable dynamism, despite the concurrent military decline and erosion of political influence that characterized the period. Concurrent with the political and military deterioration, indications of a sophisticated and cultured society characterized by discerning tastes began to appear. Literary works composed in genres including poetry, historical narratives, and biographical compilations garnered significant attention. Victory narratives and chronicles were replaced by broader historical accounts, along with collections of divans, poets, viziers, and Sufi biographies. These scholarly contributions were not only perused and impactful within the Timurid territories but also across the broader Islamic world. The numerous copies of almost every genre generated within the Timurid sphere that are present in Ottoman libraries serve as evidence of this phenomenon. In this context, it is adequate to analyze the contributions of several prominent individuals, including Kaşifî, Nevai, Cami, and Ali Kuşcu.

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[69] Ali İhsan Çağlar, *15. Yüzyıl Maveraünnehir'de Nakşiliğin Sosyo-Ekonomik Yapısı: Hace Ahrar ve Dönemi (1450-1490),* (PhD Thesis), Hacettepe Üniversitesi SBE Tarih Anabi- lim Dalı, Ankara 2015.

[70] Özden Erdoğan, *Conception of Political Pover and the Timurid Cultural Achievements Du- ring the Reign of Sultan Husayn Bayqara*, (PhD Thesis), Orta Doğu Teknik University, Institute of Social Sciences, Department of History, Ankara 2023. For the cultural revival during the period of Hüseyin Baykara please see pp.240-247.



What is the role of Timur and his state—or more accurately, the Timurid dynasty—in the context of Turkish and global history? Alternatively, do they possess any unique attributes that distinguish them from other dynasties? If that is the case, then what exactly is the distinction? The ensuing response may be offered. Emir Timur was an individual who effectively integrated two cultures characterized by profound traditions. He was nurtured in a milieu that integrated the sedentary and nomadic lifestyles, as well as the political traditions of the Mongol (Chinggisid) legacy and the Islamic administrative tradition—two spheres frequently regarded as separate in contemporary scholarship. Similar to the rulers observed in Asian and Islamic history, he strove to enhance his center both demographically and culturally, and he achieved this objective. His successors implemented analogous policies, reinforcing Islamic culture in Turkistan and making substantial contributions to the modernization and upkeep of administrative structures founded on collective experience.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: The surviving remains of Aksaray, constructed in the city of Keş (Shahr-i Sabz), which Emir Timur considered designating as his capital. However, he later chose Samarkand as the center of his empire.



Source: Hayrunnisa Alan Archives

Appensix 2: A view of Emir Timur's monumental mausoleum in Samarkand.



Source: Hayrunnisa Alan Archives

Appendix 3: A model of the observatory building commissioned by Ulugh Beg (d. 1449) in Samarkand, where the famous Zīj was compiled. The underground portion of the observatory has been uncovered through archaeological excavations, and a museum building has been constructed on the site. The model was created based on information found in historical sources.



Source: Hayrunnisa Alan Archives

Appendix 4: A view of the Ulugh Beg Madrasah at Registan Square in Samarkand.



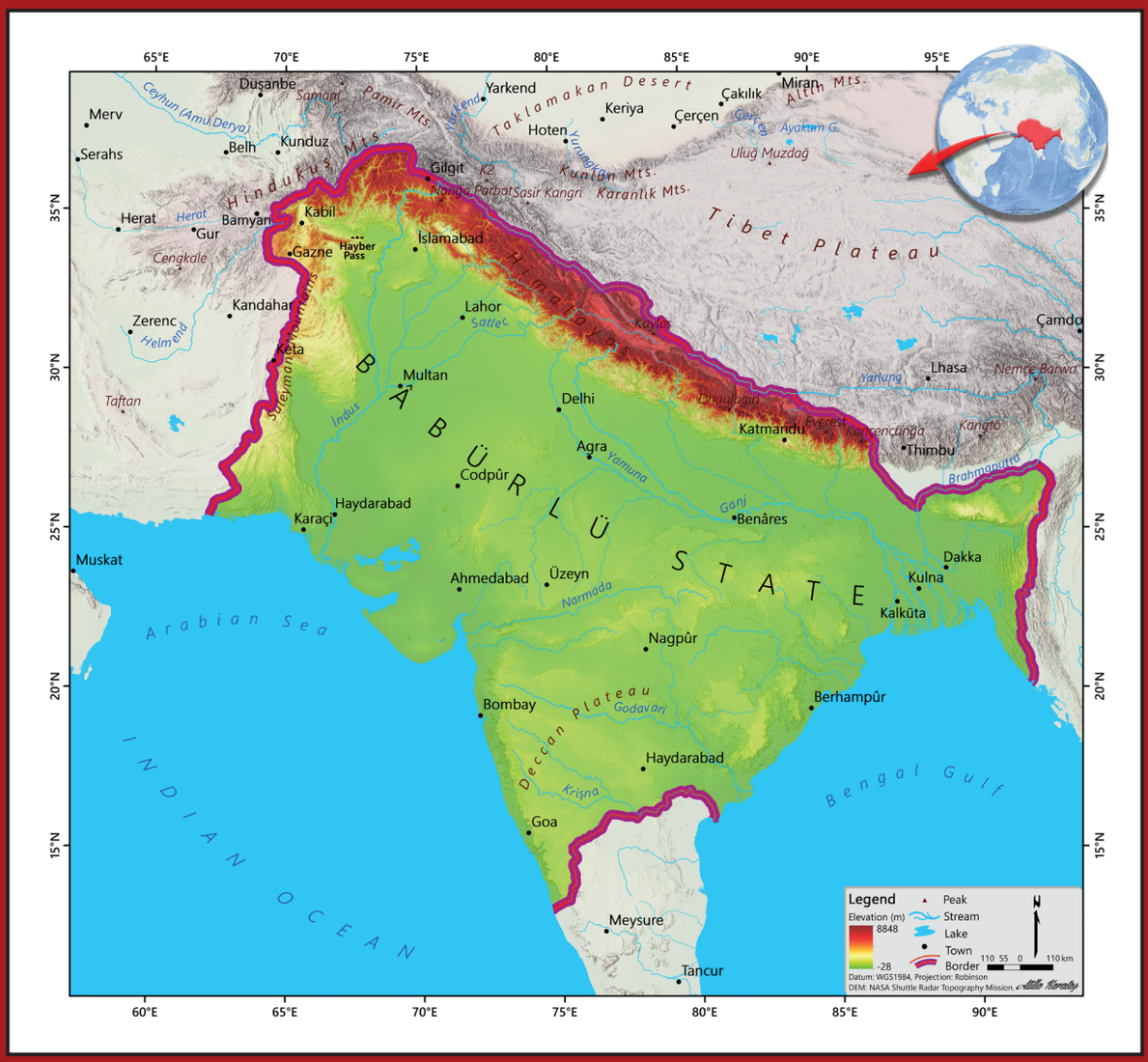
Source: Hayrunnisa Alan Archives

Appendix 5: A view of the remains of the observatory building constructed by Ulugh Beg on Kuhek Hill in Samarkand, along with the newly built museum structure.



Source: Hayrunnisa Alan Archives

The Baburid (Gurkanid) State



Source: Atilla Karataş Collection



THE BABURID (GURKANID) STATE

(1526-1858)

Cihan ORUÇ*

Bābur

Bābur was born on February 14, 1483, in Fergana as a member of the Timurid dynasty. His father, Umar Shaykh Mirza, was the offspring of Sultan Abu Sa'id, a lineage tracing back to Timur. His mother, Qutluq Nigār Khānım, was the offspring of Yūnus Khān, a lineage tracing back to Chinggis Khān. Khwāja Ubaydullāh, the spiritual mentor of the family, conferred upon Bābur the name Ẓahīr al-Dīn Muḥammad at his birth. The name signifies "guardian of the faith, Muhammad." Furthermore, it is posited that, in alignment with Turkish customs and traditions predating a century, and potentially as a selection indicative of allegiance to ancestral origins or to extant "Shamanic" convictions, he was also bestowed with the name Bābur (tiger).[1] During his time as the ruler of Kabul, Bābur ordered those around him to call him "pādishāh."[2] After his conquests in India, he was bestowed with the title of "ghāzī."[3] His two half-brothers, Jahāngīr Mirza, were two

1 Jean-Paul Roux, *Babur: Büyük Moğolların Tarihi*, trans. Lale Arslan Özcan, Dergâh Yayınları, Istanbul 2021, pp.133-134.

2 Gazi Zahîreddin Muhammed Babur, *Baburnâme: Babur'un Hâtıratı*, C.II, trans. Reşit Rahmeti Arat, MEB Publications, Istanbul 1970, p.342.

3 Babur, *op.cit,* Vol.III, p.528.

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and four years younger, respectively. Bābur's early life remains largely undocumented. He obtained an education of remarkably high quality. He possessed exemplary penmanship and subsequently authored several significant poems. In light of the historical context in which he resided and his ancestry, it can be asserted that he was a commendable equestrian, a proficient marksman, an adept swordsman, and a formidable hunter. Prior to assuming his father's position, he had demonstrated his exceptional leadership capabilities.[4]

Bābur was unfamiliar with the language spoken by his mother, who had Mongol ancestry. Certainly, during the formative years of his childhood, he acquired a vocabulary of Mongolian terms from his mother. Nevertheless, subsequent to their separation, he entirely forgot the language.[5] In his work *Bāburnāma*, that is penned in Chagatai Turkish, Bābur writes that the people of Andijan, the capital of his birthplace, Fergana, were Turks and that everyone in the town and marketplaces spoke Turkish.[6] In the palace of his father, ʿUmar Shaykh, Turkish was the dominant language. From infancy, Bābur learned and spoke Turkish as his mother tongue. His proficiency in the use of Turkish continued through the years. As a result of this, he gained a strong sense of Turkish identity.[7] In addition to his native language, Bābur acquired proficiency in Persian, which held considerable literary significance in Turkestan and was utilized by nearly all individuals in Mā warāʾ al-Nahr. There is no conclusive data regarding Bābur proficiency in Arabic, the language associated with his faith—Islam.[8]

Bābur's formative years occurred during an era characterized by the administration of the Timurid state through local dynasties. Following the demise of his grandfather, Abū Saʿīd Mirza, in 1469, the state was partitioned among the Timurid mirzas. His father, ʿUmar Shaykh Mirza, assumed the governance of Fergana. Growing up in the capital city of Andijan, Bābur had the chance to visit Samarkand at the young age of five. Captivated by the city's charm, Mirza would subsequently articulate in his Bāburnāma, "There are few cities globally that rival the

4 L. F. Rushbrook Williams, *An Empire Builder of the Sixteenth Century*, Longman, Green and Co., London 1918, p.30.

5 Roux, *op.cit.*, pp.133-136.

6 Babur, *op.cit,* vol.I, 4.4.

7 Cihan Oruç, "Bâbürün İktidar Mücadelesinde Meşruiyet Kaynağı Olarak Türklük, Timur ve Timurlu Mirası", *Genel Türk Tarihi Araştırmaları Dergisi*, V (2023), p.551.

8 Roux, *op.cit.*, p.137.



beauty of Samarkand... Prior to Timur Beg, no sultan of comparable stature had designated Samarkand as his capital."[9] 'Umar Shaykh Mirza perished in an accident on June 8, 1494 and subsequently, at the mere age of twelve, Babur ascended to the position of ruler of Fergana. His genuine aspiration, nevertheless, was to attain dominion over Samarkand, the illustrious heritage of his forebear Timur.[10] Nevertheless, he initially resisted the assaults of his paternal uncle, Sultan Aḥmad Mirza, the sovereign of Samarkand, and subsequently confronted those of his maternal uncle, Maḥmūd Khān, the ruler of Tashkent. He then obstructed the progress of Abā Bakr, the leader of the Dughlat Mongols, thereby safeguarding his throne.[11]

After the death of Sultan Aḥmad Mirza, his brother Maḥmūd Mirza ascended to the Samarkand throne. Following Maḥmūd's death, his sons Bāysunghur Mirza and Sultan ʿAlī Mirza started a civil war for the succession. Bābur aligned with ʿAlī and enabled him to become the ruler of Samarkand. This victory ensured that Bābur could enter Samarkand in November 1497. Nevertheless, the economic challenges resulting from the siege culminated in Bābur's erosion of support from the local populace. During this time, his brother Jahāngīr had taken control of Andijan from Akhsi. Although Bābur sought to govern Samarkand, he had relinquished his authority over the throne of Fergana. Weakened by these developments, Bābur became ill and retreated to Khujand. He made an additional attempt to capture Samarkand; however, he was unsuccessful and was compelled to withdraw to the region south of Ūrā-Tīpa. In 1499, Bābur successfully reclaimed Andijan from his brother, albeit necessitating the division of the Fergana territories. The region situated north of the Syr Darya was under the jurisdiction of Bābur, whereas the southern portion was controlled by Jahāngīr. Following these occurrences, the Tarḥāns, a distinguished family from Samarkand who had developed dissatisfaction with Sultan ʿAlī Mirza, extended an invitation to Bābur to visit the city. Accepting this invitation favorably, Bābur proceeded in the direction of Samarkand. Nevertheless, Uzbek Sultan Shaybānī Khān acted more rapidly and secured dominion over the city in 1500.[12]

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9 Babur, *op.cit.*, Vol.I, p.69.

10 Michael H. Fisher, *Bâbürlüler: Hindistan'da Bir Türk İmparatorluğu*, trans. M. Fatih Çalışır, Kronik Publishing, İstanbul 2020, s.43.

11 Enver Konukçu, "Bâbür", *DİA*, IV, (1991), p.395.

12 Roux, *op.cit.*, pp.152-177.

By emphasising to the local people the fact that Tīmūr and his descendants were of great service to Samarkand in the past, Bābur with the support of the city's elites and the general public, was able to capture the city.[13] Nevertheless, merely a few months before, he experienced a significant defeat due to intense attacks by Shaybānī Khān. The populace was able to withstand the siege for a mere four months, and in 1501, the city capitulated. Bābur was able to depart from the city by entrusting his sister, Khānzāda Begum, to Shaybānī Khān.[14] With the support of his maternal uncles, Fergana, which he had ceded to Jahāngīr under their agreement, also soon fell into Shaybānī Khān's hands. Following this event, Bābur went to Kabul and became its ruler. Meanwhile, Shaybānī Khān continued his campaigns of conquest, capturing the Khwārazm region and Balkh between 1504 and 1505, and in 1507, he seized Herat, which was under the control of the sons of Ḥusayn Bāyqarā. Through these achievements, Shaybānī Khān laid the foundations of the Chinggisid Uzbek Khanate and closed the doors to Bābur's aspirations of reclaiming power in the ancestral lands of his forefathers.[15] In the face of all these developments, Bābur was left with two options: either to be content with ruling Kabul, situated between Turkistan and India, or to claim his alleged inheritance over the larger territories of his Timurid ancestors.

Bābur was unable to quell his aspiration to capture Samarkand. Consequently, he ostensibly aligned himself with Shi'ism and obtained the endorsement of the Safavid monarch, Shāh Ismāʿīl. Through this partnership, he seized Samarkand in 1513 and in exchange for the aid provided, acknowledged Safavid sovereignty, even to the extent of having the Friday sermon (khuṭba) recited in the name of Shāh Ismāʿīl and coins minted in his honor in the mosques of Samarkand.[16] Nonetheless, this circumstance proved to be transient. Bābur's recognition of Safavid authority was regarded as dishonorable by individuals sharing the same Timurid lineage. The residents of Samarkand refused to accept the authority of the Safavids and the Shīʿī faith in the city, which forced Bābur to retreat to Kabul.[17] Af-

[13] Nurten Kılıç, *Siyasal Kültürde Değişim: Şeybani Han ve Özbek Siyasal Oluşumu (1500-1510)*, (Unpublished PhD Thesis), Ankara Üniversitesi SBE, Ankara 1999, pp.127-128.

[14] Abdullah Gündoğdu, "Şiban Han Sülalesi ve Özbek Ulusunun Teşekkülü", *Türkler*, VIII (2002), p.1053.

[15] Oruç, *op.cit.*, p.554.

[16] Rumlu Hasan, *Şah İsmail Tarihi (Ahsenü't Tevârih)*, trans. Cevat Cevan, Ardıç Publications, Ankara 2004, p.156.

[17] Fisher, *op.cit.*, p.55.



ter permanently departing from Samarkand, Bābur relinquished any ambition to reacquire the city. Although he had not succeeded in reclaiming the legacy of his ancestor Tīmūr in Turkistan, this inheritance was not confined solely to that geographic area. By 1519, Bābur had resolved to assert his entitlement to the legacy of his ancestors in India.

As Bābur progressed towards India, he abandoned the legacy of Tīmūr in Samarkand. Perceiving the Mongols as looters and ravagers, Bābur disregarded his maternal lineage connection to that group. Nevertheless, the Timurid dynastic legacy and his paternal Turkish identity remained his principal sources of legitimacy in the pursuit of his future political aspirations. The subsequent terms in his work are of notable importance in enhancing comprehension of this subject:

> We continue to aspire to dominate India. Provinces including Bhera, Khushab, Jhanabad, and Jhelum were subject to Turkish governance for a period, and we regarded them as our legitimate holdings; we held the expectation that we would attain dominion over them either through military means or via peaceful transition. Consequently, it was essential and crucial to foster positive relationships with the inhabitants of these mountainous areas. It is for the following reason that: It was mandated that no individual should inflict harm or damage upon their livestock.[18] Bābur, via his envoy Abdurrahim Shigavul, conveyed a message to the residents of Bhera asserting, "These regions have historically been under Turkish dominion; therefore, there is no cause for apprehension or alarm, nor should the populace be exposed to chaos, we maintain genuine relations with the inhabitants of these provinces, and no looting will occur."[19]

Bābur then set out for Bhera, and the local chiefs came before him and pledged their allegiance.[20] The term of the "Turk" used above, denotes Bābur referring to Timur and his descendants. His remarks regarding the provinces unequivocally illustrate this point: "Following Timur Bey's expedition to India, numerous provinces including Bhera, Hoshab, Chenab, and Jhelum have been governed by Timur Bey's sons and their adherents and subjects."[21] Some of his soldiers, after capturing Bhera, had behaved badly towards the inhabitants there. Bābur describes how he punished his men after this incident with the following statement: "The soldiers

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18 Babur, ibid, Vol.II, p.357.

19 Babur, ibid, Vol.II, p.358.

20 Bilal Koç, *Bâbürlüler Devletinin Kurucusu Bâbür Şah'ın Dış Siyaseti*, (Unpublished MA Theses), Gazi Üniversitesi SBE, Ankara 2011, p.79.

21 Babur, *op.cit.*, Vol.II, p.358.

engaged in unlawful conduct toward the residents of Bhera, resulting in their exploitation and plunder. I dispatched individuals and ordered the execution of certain offenders, while others endured the piercing of their noses and subsequent exhibition throughout the camp."[22] In his work, Bābur stresses that he officially recognized these provinces as Turkish settlements, and therefore stated that they were not subjected to looting.[23]

Bābur assumed control of the Delhi territories that had been previously been under the domination of his ancestor Timur in 1398 for a brief period.[24] Consequently, in 1519, he dispatched Molla Murshid as an emissary to Sultan Ibrahim Lodi of Delhi. Bābur claimed the "provinces affiliated with the Turks." Molla Murshid was authorized to convey letters to the Governor Devlet Khan of Lahore and Sultan Ibrahim. Nevertheless, Devlet Khan declined to engage with the envoy, impeded his interaction with Ibrahim Lodi, and ultimately incarcerated him. Even though the envoy eventually returned to Kabul, he returned empty handed. Babur did not refrain from stating the following, "These people of India, and especially the Afghans, are stupid, lack common sense and wisdom."[25] Commencing in 1519, Bābur conducted four incursions into the Indian territory, during which he observed extensive dissension and inadequate governance within the Lodi Sultanate. During the winter of 1525-26, he employed his extensive experience in the pursuit of a substantial campaign focused on the acquisition of India. Always mindful of the adage "Ten friends are superior to nine," he refrained from initiating an attack on Lahore until all his allies had arrived. His remarkable organizational abilities allowed him to advance his 12,000 soldiers at a rate of 16 to 22 miles per day subsequent to crossing the Indus River. Through his exceptional leadership, he successfully overcame three forces significantly greater in size than his own.[26]

The Afghan army, led by Sultan Ibrahim Lodi, suffered a comprehensive defeat in the Battle of Panipat on April 20, 1526. This conflict, during which Ibrahim Lodi perished, facilitated Bābur 's access to northern India. Subsequently, he

[22] Babur, *op.cit*., Vol.II, p.360.

[23] Babur, *op.cit.*, C.II, p.361.

[24] A. Ahat Andican, *Emir Timur: Tarih, Siyaset, Miras*, Selenge Publications, Istanbul 2019. p.598.

[25] Babur, *op.cit*., Vol.II, pp.361-362.

[26] F. Lehmann, "Babor, Zahir-Al-Din Mohammad", *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, vol.III/3 (2011), pp.320-323.



captured Delhi and then Agra, where he assumed the throne. The Afghan-origin and various other beys, lacking insight into Bābur's intentions, exhibited either a cautious demeanor towards him or opted to disregard him entirely. The Turkish military encountered numerous regional factors within this unfamiliar territory. The demise of certain Turkish individuals who were unable to endure the climatic conditions of India elicited a longing among the beys and soldiers to return to Kabul. Babur scarcely persuaded them to remain. By employing specific strategies, he effectively garnered the support of his adversaries.[27] He subdued those who opposed him through the use of intimidation. The communication he addressed to the Emir of Biyane serves as an excellent illustration: "O Emir of Biyane, refrain from engaging in conflict with the Turks; their agility and valor are widely recognized." If you fail to respond promptly and follow guidance, what purpose serves an explanation of what is already understood?"[28]

Upon arriving in northern India, Bābur encountered two significant adversaries. The initial category comprised the substantial Afghan populations inhabiting the Ganja plain in the east, while the second group consisted of Rana Sanga, the sovereign of the Mewar State located in the west. In August 1526, he initially dispatched his son, Hümâyun, to confront the Afghans. In a matter of months, Hümâyun successfully drove back the Afghans and responded to his father's call to return.[29] The following year (1527), Bābur was victorious over the army led by Rana Sanga of the Mewar State, that comprised of eighty thousand Rajput cavalry and five hundred armored war elephants, with his comparatively smaller forces at Kanwa. Bābur 's military equipment and the siege strategies extensively employed by his Turkestan cavalry demonstrated their efficacy against the Rajputs. Following this conflict, which resulted in the deaths of Rana Sanga and numerous Rajput leaders, the likelihood of the Rajputs reclaiming power in northern India was effectively negated. In 1528, Bābur marched with his forces towards the significant fortress of Chandiri, which was governed by the most influential Rajput chieftain loyal to Rana. The soldiers of Bābur, successfully penetrating the defenses of the fortress, annihilated the resident troops and effectively eradicated the Rajput threat.[30]

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27 Gazi Zahîreddin Muhammed Babur, *Baburnâme (Vekayi)*, trans. Reşit Rahmeti Arat, Kabalcı Publishers, Istanbul 2006, p.106.

28 Babur, *op.cit*., Vol.III, p.484.

29 Gâzi Zahîreddin Muhammed Bâbür, *op.cit*., p.106.

30 John F. Richards, *Bâbür Türk İmparatorluğu: Tarih Kültür Teşkilat*, trans. Y. Tekin, Selenge Publications, Istanbul 2021, p.28.

Bābur's victories in combat were subsequently accompanied by the encirclement of fortresses where his injured adversaries had sought sanctuary. During these sieges, Babur utilized his firearms to their maximum potential. In 1529, with the objective of integrating his forces with those of the Bengal Governor to combat Afghan rebels in Bihar, he advanced eastward, transporting cannons loaded onto boats along the Ganges River. The artifacts he confiscated from Ibrahim Lodi were utilized in these expensive conflicts. The newly ascended emperor of northern India was compelled to implement a series of exceptional taxes.[31] During his involvement in these matters in India, Bābur had not neglected the ancestral territories from which he originated. In order to avoid leaving his recently established state without leadership, he dispatched his son Hümâyun, the governor of Badakhshan, to Hisar and Samarkand. Nevertheless, Hümâyun lacked an army sufficiently formidable to claim the Timurid legacy in the Transoxiana region. He victoriously captured Hisar for a short period of time. However, he was not able to assume complete control over the territories.[32] Bābur died shortly after these events, on December 25, 1530.[33]

The boundaries of the state that Bābur bequeathed encompassed regions beyond his territories in Turkistan to include Kabul, Punjab, Delhi, sections of Bihar in the east, and as far south as Gwalior. Nevertheless, the Baburid Empire achieved minimal progress in solidifying its authority within the recently acquired Indian territories. Bābur bequeathed to his successors the Mongol lineage traced through his mother to Genghis Khan, as well as the Turkic lineage traced through his father to Timur. In fact, the Baburid Dynasty asserted significant legitimacy by tracing its lineage to Timur.[34] Similar to numerous founding rulers, Bābur held the conviction that political authority was conferred by divine decree. This principle, manifested in the ancient Turkic tradition of sovereignty as the "kut belief," constituted one of the most significant arguments in his quest for power. Following this reasoning, he firmly believed that his truimph at the Battle of Panipat was due to divine grace and assistance.[35] Turkestani equestrian skills and warfare techniques additionally constituted an integral aspect of his heritage. Furthermore, Bābur held

[31] Hermann Kulke-Dietmar Rothermund, *Hindistan Tarihi*, trans. M. Günay, İmge Kitabevi, Ankara 2001, p.285.

[32] Roux, *op.cit*., p.375.

[33] Gâzi Zahîreddin Muhammed Bâbür, *op.cit*., p.108

[34] Oruç, "Bâbürün İktidar Mücadelesinde," p.549.

[35] Babur, *op.cit*., C. III, p.440.



a robust Sunni Islamic belief and familial association with the traditional Naqshbandi order, originating from Turkistan. This legacy is founded upon an elaborate cultural aesthetic that originated under Timur's patronage in Samarkand and was progressively refined over time in the courts of his successors in Turkestan. The most notable legacy that Bābur lefy is his memoir, the *Baburnama*, composed in Turkish, which documents his experiences from his early years in Fergana to his triumphs in India.[36]

Hümâyun Shah

Hümâyun, who assumed the role of the Baburid ruler in 1530, was born on March 7, 1508. In his formative years, he observed his father's eventful existence and benefited from instruction provided by distinguished scholars of the era across diverse disciplines. He received thorough instruction in astronomy, geometry, algebra, governance, and religious topics. His father designated him as the governor of the Kabul and Badakhshan provinces. Subsequent to his victory in the battle that occurred in the Hisar region in 1526, he was considered eligible to receive the revenue generated from that territory. Hümâyun engaged in the Battle of Panipat, where he achieved success and subsequently seized Agra, which was previously under Afghan dominion.[37] Hümâyun assumed the Baburid throne on the inaugural Friday subsequent to his father's demise on December 29, 1530. In line with the traditions of Turkic statecraft, he designated members of the dynasty to diverse regions of the nation and engaged in power-sharing arrangements with them. Kamran was appointed as governor of Kabul and Kandahar, Akari to Sembel, Hindal to Alwar, and Suleiman to Badakhshan.[38]

Hümâyun 's initial ten years on the throne were characterized by ongoing incursions into the territories inherited from the Afghan warlords of the Lodi dynasty, as well as by threats emanating from Rajput and Gujarati forces to the south. In 1531, he established dominance over the Rajput ruler of Kalinjar and subsequently, in the following year, initiated a siege against Shir Khan at Chunar. In 1535, he

36 Richards, *op.cit.*, p.29.

37 Mihter Cevher Aftabcı, *Bâbürlü Hükümdarı Hümâyûn Şah'ın Özel Kayıtları: Tezkiretü'l Vakıyât-ı Hümâyun*, trans. O. Mert Kemaloğlu, Bilge Kültür-Sanat Publications, Istanbul 2024, p.18.

38 Gülbeden, *Hümayunname*, trans. Abdürrab Yelgar, Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, Ankara 1987, p.6.

initiated a military campaign against Bahadur, the Sultan of Gujarat, whom he besieged at Mandasor and ultimately exiled. In 1537, Hümâyun embarked on a campaign eastward to engage with the increasing influence of the Afghan forces led by Shir Khan Sur in Bihar. During his tenure in Bengal, Shir Khan successfully seized the fort at Chunar. Nevertheless, in Shir Khan's absence from the capital, Hümâyun's brother Hindal had assumed the throne in Agra. Shortly subsequent to this event, another sibling, Kamran, usurped authority from Hindal. During Hümâyun's endeavor to journey from Bengal back to Agra, Shir Khan confronted him in Chausa on June 26, 1539. In the ensuing rout, Hümâyun narrowly avoided drowning in the Ganges.[39] Following this occurrence, he sought refuge in Agra Fort and, as Afghan forces progressed, migrated westward. Nonetheless, on May 17, 1540, he experienced his second defeat at Kannauj. This was subsequently accompanied by the Timurids' retreat to Lahore and their expulsion from the territories located east of the Indus River.[40]

Hümâyun dedicated the subsequent fifteen years to his status as an exiled royal, actively pursuing strategies to regain his throne in India. Moving from Sindh and Kandahar, he reached Qazvin and sought asylum with the Safavid monarch Shah Tahmasp I. In exchange for providing Hümâyun with a small military force, Tahmasp required that he embrace Shi'ism. Hümâyun agreed to this proposition. The Safavid sovereign further mandated the surrender of Kandahar, a location of considerable military and economic importance, to his authority. In 1545, Hümâyun successfully captured Kandahar, and in 1547, he extended his dominion to include Kabul. He established significant authority over the Timurids in the area. He ultimately eradicated the challenge presented by his brothers in 1552. Following the demise of Sher Shah, his son Islam Shah succeeded to the throne in India. Nevertheless, due to the failure to establish robust authority, Islam Shah passed away in 1554, leading to a subsequent competition for the throne among three contenders. Capitalizing on this opportunity, Hümâyun advanced from Kabul, overcame three Afghan forces, and seized Delhi on 23 July 1555, thereby reinstating Mughal sovereignty. Nevertheless, as a result of injuries that could not be remedied, he passed away six months subsequently, on 26 January 1556.[41]

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39 Wheeler M. Thackston, "Homayun Padesah", *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, XII/4 (2012), p.437-439.

40 Gul-Badan, Begam, *History of Hümayun*, trans. Annette S. Beveridge, London 1902, p.29.

41 Dougles E. Streusand, *Ateşli Silahlar Çağında İslam İmparatorlukları: Osmanlılar Safeviler Bâbürlüler*, tran. Bahar Fırat, Ufuk Publications, Istanbul 2015, p.215.



Hümâyun believed in the *kut*, which played a significant role in the older Turkish state tradition. The historian Handmir discusses Hümâyun's ascension to the Mughal monarchy after his father within this framework.[42] While Babur had adopted the legacy of the Timurid dynasty of Turkic origin, he did not fully capitalize on this dynastic tradition to enhance the legitimacy of his governance. Conversely, he leveraged his expertise in astrology to develop a cosmological framework for understanding sovereignty. Handmiri articulated this comprehension of governance in his opus, Kānūn-i Humāyūnī. Hümâyun established specific organizational frameworks. He categorized his palace and administrative structure into three groups—ahl-i dawlat (people of state), ahl-i sa'ādat (people of felicity), and ahl-i murād (people of desire)—according to a system he termed the "arrow system," which was predicated on the standard of gold purity. Each of these comprised twelve levels, symbolized by an arrow that corresponds to its degree of purity. The supreme, twelfth arrow represented Hümâyun himself, corresponding to the highest standard of red (pure) gold. The bottom arrow signified stewards, grooms, and individuals in analogous roles. Each arrow possessed three classifications: high, middle, and low.[43]

In one of the strategies he utilized, Hümâyun classified the divisions of his administration in accordance with the primary components observed in nature. Military affairs were symbolized by fire, civil matters pertaining to the populace by air, irrigation by water, and construction and land-related issues by earth.[44] Moreover, in the administration of religious and state matters, he employed numerals such as twelve and seven, ascribing to them astrological, mystical, and divine significance. Hümâyun allocated specific days of the week to the previously mentioned categories—ahl-i dawlat, ahl-i sa'ādat, and ahl-i murād. This distribution was constructed based on cosmological principles, considering the interplay between the Moon, the Sun, and the planets with the days of the week and the responsibilities of these groups. Furthermore, Hümâyun donned garments in hues aligned with the celestial bodies and planets linked to each particular day of the

[42] Khwandamir, *Qanun-ı Hümayuni*, nşr. M. Hidayat Hosain, Baptist Mission Press, Kalküta 1940, p.21.

[43] Khwandamir, *op.cit*., pp.43-44; Ebü'l Fazl el-Allâmî, *Ekbernâme*, Vol.I, tsh. Mevlevi Ağa Ahmed Ali ve Mevlevi Abdurrahim, Asiyatik Society Bengale, Kalküta 1877, p.359.

[44] Fisher, *op.cit*., p.100.

week.[45] Hümâyun's rituals were deemed incompatible with solid realities, failed to establish his dominance over his brothers, Turkestani commanders, Muslim and non-Muslim Indian officials, and the local Indian population. Prominent individuals from Turkestan advocated for a role in governance and opposed Hümâyun's ambition to solidify authority. During his reign, Hümâyun was necessitated to address numerous persistent rebellions.[46]

Akbar Shah

Akbar was only thirteen years old when Hümâyun passed away. During his father's years of exile in Safavid territories, he had remained in Afghanistan. There, he was raised among warriors, but he never learned to read or write. Unlike his father and grandfather, who had received an excellent education, he was not well versed. However, with his sharp intellect, he surpassed them both. When he focused on a particular issue, he displayed an exceptionally strong memory.[47] During his return journey from Punjab, where he had accompanied his father's devoted associate Bayram Khan to address the maladministration of Governor Abdul Mali, Akbar received word of his father's demise in Kalanaur. Following the completion of the traditional mourning rites, the coronation occurred on February 14, 1556. In light of the new sovereign's youth, being only thirteen years old, Bayram Khan assumed the position of regent and diligently fulfilled the duties of the empire.[48]

Upon assuming the throne in 1556, Akbar held only a nominal sovereignty over a limited region of Punjab. Shortly following the demise of his father, the cities of Delhi and Agra were seized by the Hindu figure Hemu. In Punjab as well, Akbar's assertion of authority was contested by Sikandar Suri. The Kabul area enjoyed considerable autonomy under the governance of his half-brother, Mirza Hakim.[49] Hemu, who was vanquished by the Mughal forces under the command of Bayram Khan at the Battle of Panipat (5 November 1556), had previously relin-

[45] Cihan Oruç, "Bâbürlü Hükümdarı Hümâyun'un Kozmolojik Hükümranlık Anlayışı", *XI. Uluslararası Türk Dünyası Araştırmaları Sempozyumu Bildiriler Kitabı*- C. II, G. Tuğlacı, K. Akman, M. N. Ertem, Bakı Avrasiya Universiteti, Bakı 2024, p.487.

[46] Fisher, *op.cit*., p.100.

[47] Kulke-Rothermund, *op.cit*., pp.287-288.

[48] S.M. Jaffar, *The Mughal Empire From Babar To Aurangzeb*, Peshawar 1936, pp.72-73.

[49] Ashirbadi Lal Srivastava, *The Mughal Empire (1526-1803 A.D)*, Shiva Lal Agarwala and Company, Agra 1986, pp.133-134.



quished control of Delhi. A year subsequently, the Bare Sayyids acknowledged the authority of the Mughal Empire. Following a period of unease with the authority of the Shi'a Bayram Khan, Emperor Akbar relieved him of his duties in 1560 and directed him to undertake a pilgrimage. The Mughal statesman was assassinated en route by Afghan nobles in Patan, Gujarat, in 1561. In 1562, Raja Bhar Mal of Jaipur acknowledged Akbar's supremacy and offered his daughter in matrimony to him. Through this union, Rajput influence gained strength at the Mughal court. Gradually, non-Muslims, particularly Rajputs, commenced their service in Mughal positions. Hindus were recruited at the court in significantly larger numbers compared to the elite group of Turkestani origin. Finally, in 1564, at the age of twenty-two, Akbar successfully emancipated himself from the political guidance of the women in the harem and their kin, thereby reinforcing his authority.[50]

The military campaigns conducted during the initial years of Akbar's reign facilitated the consolidation of his authority over the territories he had previously acquired. Subsequently, in 1562, he seized the strategically important fort of Chunar; in 1574, he acquired the province of Bihar; and in 1576, he annexed Bengal, thereby expanding the empire's eastern boundaries along the Ganges basin. In the southern region, the annexation of Malwa in 1561, along with the acquisition of the renowned Rajput fortresses of Chitor in 1568 and Ranthambhor in 1569, conferred upon Akbar a strategic advantage over the Rajput highlands and their associated passes, facilitating his subsequent seizure of Gujarat in 1572. The vital port of Surat was captured in 1573. Subsequently, Akbar incorporated Gujarat, a region significant for maritime and commercial activities, with the agrarian hubs of Punjab and the Ganges basin, thereby facilitating the growth of trade and production within the Mughal Empire. His subsequent conquests, Kashmir in 1586–87, Sindh in 1591–92, sections of Orissa in 1592–93, and diverse areas of the Deccan plateau from 1596 to 1601, possessed considerable political and cultural importance. Nevertheless, these achievements exerted minimal influence on the imperial economy. He recognized the challenges posed by Portuguese naval dominance in coastal regions. Notwithstanding his engagement with international trade and the pilgrimage route, he failed to implement substantive measures to contest it.[51]

Akbar's disposition facilitated his success in political endeavors in a manner akin to his achievements on the battlefield. Furthermore, commencing in the latter

[50] Enver Konukçu, "Ekberşah", *DİA*, X, p.542.

[51] F. Lehmann, "Akbar I", *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, I/7 (2014), p.707-711.

portion of his reign, his advisors—influenced by his character—initiated the development of a novel ideological framework focused on their monarch. Abul Fazl, during the period when Fatehpur Sikri functioned as the imperial capital, established himself as an ideologue and propagandist of the Timurid dynasty, owing to his expansive vision and political insight. This intellectual, endeavoring to furnish Akbar and his successors with a modern source of legitimacy, assumed an imperial responsibility and produced the renowned Akbarnama, thereby establishing the groundwork for a Timurid dynastic ideology. This development reached maturity under the authority conferred upon him and represented a strategic maneuver of considerable significance for the dynasty.[52] *Tarikh-i Alfi* by Mulla Ahmad Tatavi, is also among the most well-known sources of the period written with the aim of building a Timurid dynastic ideology, much like the *Akbarnama*.[53]

In his endeavor to convert his domain into an empire, Emperor Akbar was acutely cognizant of the prevailing conditions that presented challenges to this objective. The most salient challenge he encountered was the hierarchical social structure, which included Turks migrating from the north in the first stratum, native Muslims in the second, and Hindus in the third. It seemed impractical for a limited number of Turks in positions of authority to govern effectively millions of Hindus—whose population consistently increased daily. In this context, the most reasonable strategy was considered to be the dissolution of hierarchical social divisions through the prioritization of religious differences. Notwithstanding the reservations of the Mughal elite, Akbar sought to establish a common groundwork between Islam and Hinduism. Furthermore, he aimed to enhance the social standing of Hindu subjects and to institute a framework of equitable citizenship within the empire. This policy, referred to as Sulh-i Kull, signifying "universal peace", is elucidated in Abul Fazl's A'in-i Akbari. In this study, the policy is articulated as follows: "The Padishah must not show discrimination among his subjects regarding the safeguarding of their property, lives, dignity, and religious beliefs."[54]

During the rule of Mughal Emperor Akbar, from 1573 to 1574, the mansab system was established, which categorized the positions and salaries of government

[52] Cihan Oruç, "Ekber Şah Devri Vakayinamelerinde Bir İdeolojik Unsur Olarak Timurlu Hanedan Soyunun İnşası", *Manisa Celal Bayar Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, XXII (2024), p.262.

[53] Ahmed bin. Nasrullah Tetevî, *Tarih-i Elfi*, haz. Musahhih Gulamrıza Tabatabi Mecd, Şirket-i İntişarat-i İlmi ve Ferhengi, Tahran 2013 (h.1382), p.3527.

[54] Andican, *opcit*., p.584.



officials based on a numerical hierarchy. In this system, officials possessed two numerical ranks, zat and sawar, which denoted their position and status within the imperial hierarchy. The zat rank delineated an official's status at court and the associated salary he was eligible to obtain. The sawar rank, conversely, signified the quantity of cavalrymen, mounted troops, for which the official held responsibility. Under the mansab system, officials were compensated with salaries derived from the revenues produced by the lands they governed. As an essential element of the Mughal Empire's administrative and military structure, this system significantly contributed to the governance of the expanding territorial domain. Furthermore, it facilitated the integration of skilled individuals into the imperial service. These individuals received recognition for their dedication and contributions. The mansab system, nevertheless, experienced corruption and abuse during the reigns of Jahangir and Shah Jahan, culminating in a gradual reduction in its effectiveness.[55]

Akbar Shah, in consequence of the enlargement of the imperial borders, partitioned the nation's territories into provinces designated as "subahs." In addition to the subahdar (provincial governor), he also appointed a civil administrator. This official was tasked with supervising the annual revenue and generating financial reports for the sovereign. To oversee the conduct of the official in this position and to mitigate the abuse of authority, Akbar established a clandestine intelligence agency. Furthermore, in 1583, several departments characterized by specific responsibilities were established to enhance the efficacy of state service provision. These departments were responsible for issues including judicial sanctions, registration of marriages and births, provision of public services, agricultural advancement, land distribution, appointment and dismissal of employees serving on the ruler's territories, military structure and administration of allowances, organization of military encampments and housing, price control, trade in precious metals and gemstones, inheritance disputes, and various other legal affairs. Furthermore, Akbar established a stamp system to precisely ascertain the actual number of horses for which soldiers were accountable, consequently mitigating exorbitant allowances and ensuring considerable revenue for the treasury.[56]

Akbar Shah's religious policy is distinguished as one of the most significant developments in Indian history. Akbar examined the diverse religions and sects

[55] Irfan Habib, "The Mansab System 1595-1637", *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, XXIX, Part I (1967), p.221.

[56] Konukçu, op.cit., p.542.

within India and endeavored to comprehend the existing belief systems. For this objective, he commissioned the construction of a structure known as the Ibadat Khana (House of Worship) in Fatehpur Sikri. Representatives from diverse religious traditions convened to engage in discussions on theological issues, with the goal of promoting a climate of tolerance among various faiths. These weekly gatherings established a forum for interreligious communication and established the foundation for social harmony among individuals of diverse faiths. The elimination of the jizya tax levied on non-Muslims and the integration of Hindu nobility into state administration exemplified this atmosphere of tolerance. One of Akbar's most contentious actions was the establishment of a new religion known as Din-i Ilahi (Divine Faith), which sought to unify individuals by establishing a shared foundation derived from various religious traditions. Din-i Ilahi experienced modest success during Akbar's rule but diminished in relevance following his demise. Nevertheless, Akbar's religious policy exerted a profound influence on the religious and cultural diversity of India throughout the tenures of his successors.[57]

Akbar's later years were challenging, primarily attributed to the insurrection led by his son Selim, who subsequently ascended to the throne as Jahangir. The ambiguity of the succession system and the prevailing atmosphere of conflict within the empire, which resulted in a diminished regard for sacred principles, precipitated competition for the throne among Akbar's sons during his lifetime. Notwithstanding these developments, the dynasty did not impede the continuity of the Indo-Turkish system. No claimant assumed the throne prematurely; the succession adhered to the established framework. The intense competition for the throne may lead to the demise of the princes engaged in the conflict. The successful candidate aimed to consolidate his rule by establishing reconciliation with the adherents of the vanquished adversary. Therefore, during Jahangir's reign following that of Akbar, the privileged class within the empire continued to endure. Nevertheless, Jahangir's rule introduced a novel dimension to the Mughal system through his accomplished and aspirational Persian consort, Nur Jahan, who contributed both Persian culture and a Persian faction to the court.[58]

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57 Vincent A. Smith, *Akbar: The Great Moghul 1542-1605*, At The Clarendon Press, Oxford 1917, pp.209, 66, 177, 222.

58 Kulke-Rothermund, *op.cit.*, pp.293-294.



Jahangir Shah

Jahangir assumed the throne on November 3, 1605, at the age of thirty-six, in Agra. His triumph over Husrev and his adherents was not marred by any instance of reprisal. Favors were conferred equally to both his allies and political adversaries. Sheikh Salim Chishti received honors and appointments that exceeded his anticipated status. One of Jahangir initial directives, which he prominently highlighted in his memoirs, involved the establishment of a chain of justice crafted from pure gold, measuring sixty bells in length and thirty farsakhs (an ancient Persian unit of distance) in length. One extremity of the chain was affixed to a window of Agra Fort, whereas the opposite end was secured to a stone pillar located by the riverbank. Individuals who perceived themselves as aggrieved had the option to activate the chain extending beyond the fort to capture the emperor's attention and subsequently pursue justice. Subsequent European authors regarded this as a "foolish invention" and expressed skepticism regarding its actual utilization by individuals in distress. Nevertheless, the chain represented Jahangir's commitment to impart justice equitably and resolutely.[59]

After ascending the throne, he issued a decree containing twelve orders. According to this decree, local administrators were prohibited from levying taxes on activities such as animal husbandry and maritime trade for their own benefit. In areas where robbery and banditry occurred, and which were far from settlements, houses, mosques, and wells would be constructed. No one was allowed to interfere with merchants' goods without their permission and consent. When a non-Muslim or Muslim died, their property was to be handed over to their heirs without interference. If there were no heirs, these resources could be spent on Islamic purposes such as building mosques and caravanserais, repairing destroyed bridges, and creating storage facilities and wells. The manufacturing and distribution of wine, alcoholic beverages, or any intoxicating or prohibited beverages were strictly prohibited. No citizen's residence was to be utilized for the accommodation of military personnel. The practice of removing ears or noses as a form of punishment for criminal offenses was forbidden. The property owned by the general population was safeguarded against expropriation. Officials and tax collectors (cagirdars) were prohibited from entering into marital unions with residents of their jurisdictions without obtaining prior authorization from the ruler. Hospitals

[59] Abdur Rashid, "Jahangir", *The History and Culture of The Indian People: The Mughal Empire*, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay 1974, p.176.

were to be established in significant urban centers, with physicians designated to provide patient care, and financial obligations met by the state treasury. The monarch's birthday, as well as the days Thursday and Sunday, were exempted from the practice of animal sacrifices. Finally, the positions, titles, and compensation of officials and specific groups were subject to reevaluation.[60]

Jahangir perpetuated the strategy of territorial expansion bequeathed to him by his predecessor. He orchestrated campaigns in the eastern regions, extending from Assam and Kashmir to Bengal, in addition to engaging with independent rajahs in the vicinity of the Himalayas. He contested the assertions of the Safavid sovereign regarding authority over significant northern Indian areas such as Kabul, Peshawar, and Kandahar, which constituted vital nodes within the Turkistan trade network. He dispatched the Mughal army to the sultanates located in the Deccan. Nevertheless, his son Hürrem, who commanded the military, executed several conquests against the joint forces of the Nizamshahi, Adilshahi, and Qutbshahi sultanates, subsequently turning against his father. Nonetheless, Hürrem's endeavors proved unsuccessful, and Jahangir granted him clemency under the stipulation that he reside in the Deccan, distant from the capital of Agra. As a pledge of his fidelity, Hürrem was required to maintain two of his sons as hostages. Jahangir's demise in 1627 intensified the discord among his sons and their respective allies. The competition for the throne, which resulted in the demise of numerous princes, persisted with intensity. In conclusion, Hürrem ascended the throne in Agra in early 1628, adopting the name Shah Jahan, and a sermon was delivered in his honor at the Friday Mosque.[61]

Shah Jahan

Shah Jahan ascended the throne in Agra on 18 Jumada al-Thani, 1037 AH (February 6, 1628), with the title Abu'l-Muzaffar Shihab al-Din Muhammad Sahib Qiran al-Thani, after defeating his rivals with the support of his father-in-law Asaf Khan.[62] Shortly after his accession, he had to deal with the rebellion of Khan-i

[60] Nureddin Muhammed Jahangir Gürkâni, *Jahangirnâme (Tüzük-i Jahangiri)*, Musahhih, Muhammed Haşim, Bonyad-i Farhang-i İran, 1359, pp.6-7.

[61] Burton Stein, *Hindistan Tarihi*, trans. Müfit Günay, İnkılap Publications, Istanbul 2015, p.180.

[62] Henry Miers Elliot, *Shah Janan*, Sh. Mubarak Ali, Lahor 1875, s.6; Saksena, Banarsi Prasad, *History of Shah Jahan of Dihli*, Central Book Depot, Allahabad 1931, p.59.



Jahan Lodi, a prominent figure from his father Jahangir's reign. Cihan Lodi had taken refuge with Nizamshahi Sultan Burhan Nizam Shah III, which led to some Mughal territories falling under Nizamshahi control. Soon after, Cihan Lodi also sought assistance from the sultans of the Adilshahi and Qutbshahi dynasties. To prevent aid from reaching the Deccan sultans, Shah Jahan sent letters to them.[63] The rebellion of Khan-i Jahan was eventually suppressed when Burhan Nizam Shah III forced him to leave his sultanate's borders. Pursued up to Sihind, Khan-i Jahan was killed on January 16, 1631. However, his earlier refuge in Ahmednagar under the protection of Burhan Nizam Shah III turned the Nizamshahi dynasty into a target for the Mughals.[64]

After ascending to the Mughal throne, one of Shah Jahan's immediate concerns was repelling the Uzbek attacks on Kabul and Bamyan. Taking advantage of Jahangir's death, the Uzbeks had launched assaults on these areas. The forces dispatched by Shah Jahan successfully pushed back the Uzbek armies.[65] Since 1579, the Portuguese had been using Hugli as a commercial and military base. In 1631, they incited the Bengal governor to rebel. However, the troops sent by Shah Jahan defeated the Portuguese and their Arakanese allies. Approximately four hundred prisoners captured during these conflicts were brought before Shah Jahan in 1633. The Mughal ruler released those who converted to Islam, while the others were either imprisoned or distributed as slaves among palace officials. Since his days as a prince, Shah Jahan had aimed to bring the Deccan Sultanates under control. The support found by Khan-i Jahan Lodi in the region following Shah Jahan's accession further legitimized his ambitions there. Most of the Nizamshahi Sultanate's lands were annexed by Shah Jahan's army. Later, in 1636, the Adilshahi and Qutbshahi Sultanates ended their relations with the Safavids, recognized Mughal authority, and agreed to pay annual tribute.[66]

Shah Jahan established three primary foreign policy goals upon assuming the role of Mughal ruler, each intrinsically connected, whether directly or indirectly, to the Safavid state. Initially, his objective was to recover Kandahar, which had been

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63 M. Siraj Anwar, *The Relations of the Mughal Empire with the Ahmadnagar Kingdom (1526-1636)*, (PhD Thesis), Aligarh Muslim University, India 1994, pp.155-156.

64 M. Siraj Anwar, *Mughals and the Deccans: Political Relations* with Ahmadnagar Kingdom, B. P. Publishing Corporation, Delhi 2007, p.107.

65 Cihan Oruç, *Şah Cihan Dönemi Bâbürlü Devletinin Dış Politikası,* (Unpublished PhD Thesis), Sakarya Üniversitesi SBE, Sakarya 2019, pp.68-74.

66 Fisher, *op.cit*., pp.259-260.

incorporated into the Safavid empire during his father's rule. Secondly, he aimed to annex regions that historically pertained to his forebears within the confines of the Khanate of Bukhara. Finally, he sought to assert dominance over the Deccan sultanates and dissolve their coalition with the Safavids. When Shah Jahan initiated efforts to reclaim Kandahar, he intended to preserve amicable relations with the Bukhara Khanate. In contrast, should he engage in conflict with the Bukhara Khanate, he desired the neutrality of the Safavid state. The coalition formed by the Safavids and the Bukhara Khanate had the potential to hinder his political objectives; consequently, he strived to foster amicable relations with both entities. In the initial phase of his rule, he deemed it essential to establish diplomatic relations with the Bukhara Khanate.[67] However, despite these efforts, Nezir Muhammad, the governor of Balkh under the Bukhara Khanate, laid seige to Kabul, a Mughal territory, but was repelled.[68] Shah Jahan refrained from engaging in hostilities with the Bukhara Khanate notwithstanding this aggression. In fact, he endeavored to establish a Sunni alliance bloc comprising of the Ottomans and the Bukhara Khanate in opposition to the Shiite Safavids.[69]

By the late 1630s, Shah Jahan had addressed the challenges presented by the Deccan region. After securing this key point between Iran and India, Shah Jahan planned to conquer Transoxiana, the Timurid legacy. Capitalizing on the succession dispute between Nezir Muhammad and his son Abdul Aziz, Shah Jahan deployed Prince Murad along with a substantial military force to capture Balkh and Badakhshan. The Mughal forces rapidly established dominance over these areas. Nezir Muhammad, who occupied the throne of Bukhara, sought asylum with the Safavid Empire. Nevertheless, Prince Murad conveyed to his father his aversion to remaining in the conquered territories and subsequently returned to India, notwithstanding the directives of Shah Jahan.[70] After securing this key point between Iran and India, Shah Jahan planned to conquer Transoxiana, the Timurid legacy. Capitalizing on the succession dispute between Nezir Muhammad and his son Abdul Aziz, Shah Jahan deployed Prince Murad along with a substantial military force to

[67] Riazul Islam, *Indo-Persian Relations (A Study of the Political and Diplomatic Relations between the Mughal Empire and İran)*, Iranian Culture Foundation, Tahran 1970, p.99.

[68] Abdulhamid Lahori, *Padişahname*, C.I, Böl.I, ed. M. Kabiruddin Ahmad and M. Abdur Rahim, College Press, 1867, pp.206-215.

[69] Abdur Rahim, *Mughal Relations with Persia and Central Asia: Babur to Aurangzeb,* vol. VIII-IX, Islamic Culture, 1934-1935, p.91.

[70] Lahori, *op.cit.*, Vol.II. pp.41-42.



capture Balkh and Badakhshan. The Mughal forces rapidly established dominance over these areas. Nezir Muhammad, who occupied the throne of Bukhara, sought asylum with the Safavid Empire. Nevertheless, Prince Murad conveyed to his father his aversion to remaining in the conquered territories and subsequently returned to India, notwithstanding the directives of Shah Jahan. Consequently, Prince Aurangzeb was dispatched to the region. The Mughal army's efforts to maintain their visibility in the territories until 1647 was unsuccessful against Uzbek resistance. As a result of a treaty, the Mughal forces were forced to retreat to their former borders.[71]

During the reign of Shah Jahan, in addition to several independent Muslim sultanates, the Rajput kingdoms in Banglana and Bundelkhand were subjugated under Mughal authority. Full authority was established over the territories of Hindustan, reaching as far as the Khyber Pass. During the reign of Shah Jahan, the Mughal Empire nearly reached 3,000,000 square kilometers, closely approximating the borders of modern-day India. On September 6, 1657, Shah Jahan became gravely ill, initiating a succession crisis among his four sons: Dara Shikoh, Shah Shuja, Aurangzeb, and Murad Bakhsh. Aurangzeb established dominance over his adversaries by orchestrating the deaths of his brothers Murad Bakhsh and Shah Shuja, along with Dara Shikoh, who had been designated as the heir apparent. Subsequently, Aurangzeb initiated a rebellion against his father, incarcerated him in Agra Fort, and assumed the Mughal throne on July 21, 1658. During this time, Jahanara Begum resided with her father, Shah Jahan. As his condition deteriorated, Shah Jahan ultimately succumbed to his illness on January 22, 1666. His final resting place was located with his wife, Mumtaz Mahal, within the Taj Mahal, a structure he had commissioned.[72]

Aurangzeb Shah

Beginning in his princely years, Aurangzeb directly led military campaigns against the Uzbeks and Safavids, an experience that underscored the infeasibility of regaining the territories previously controlled by his Timurid forebears. In other words, the Mughal Empire had attained its northernmost boundaries. In this context, expansion was feasible solely in the southern direction, extending beyond

71 Y. Hikmet Bayur, *Hindistan Tarihi*, Vol. II, Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, Ankara 1987, pp.207- 213.

72 Azmi Özcan, "Şah Cihan", *DİA*, XXXVIII, p.251.

Kashmir and Bengal, towards territories located beyond the Deccan. As an adept military leader, Aurangzeb deemed it imprudent to engage in military endeavors in the northern region as long as the Uzbek and Safavid states abstained from aggression. Rather, he favored expanding his authority eastward towards nations including Tibet and Assam. Following the stabilization of relationships with the Adil Shahi and Qutb Shahi sultanates in the Deccan region, he developed a complex strategy designed to quell the Hindu Maratha unrest arising along the southern frontiers and ultimately to implement swift resolutions to developments within the imperial domains. As part of this strategic framework, he initially initiated the Assam campaign through the intermediary of Bengal's governor, Mir Jumla. The Mughal army entered Gargaon without facing substantial opposition. In reaction to this circumstance, the King of Assam consented to assume the status of a Mughal vassal. Similarly, the ruler of Tibet, Necmel, was able to shield his country from Mughal assaults on the condition of paying tribute.[73]

Aurangzeb remained engaged with the Deccan matter for a significant duration throughout his reign. On one hand, initiatives were taken to assert control over territories that, as per the stipulations of the treaty with the Adilshahis, were to be relinquished to the Mughals; conversely, the escalating influence of the Maratha leader Sivaji commenced to present a challenge.[74] The Marathas, under the leadership of Sivaji, had fortified their position in the region, in part as a result of the persistent conflicts between the Mughals and the Deccan sultanates. Furthermore, the dynastic disputes arising within the Deccan sultanates established a conflict zone that also encompassed the involvement of the Marathas in opposition to the Mughals.[75] Aurangzeb began to regard Sivaji with increased seriousness following Sivaji's 1664 raid on Surat. Sivaji ultimately capitulated to the forces dispatched against him and was compelled to agree to Aurangzeb's conditions. He relinquished his fortresses and traveled to Delhi to declare his loyalty to Aurangzeb. Despite receiving a rank as a reward from Aurangzeb, in 1666 he relocated to Pune, which he had earlier established as his base, and reinforced the periphery of the city.[76]

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73 Andican, *op.cit.*, p.589.

74 Muhammed Salih Kenbu, *Amal-i Salih*, Vol.III, ed. Seyyid Ahmed Şah, Mahmud Printing Pres, Lahor 1960, pp.261-278.

75 Khalik Ahmad Nizami, "Dekken", *DİA,* IX, (1994), pp.112-113.

76 Bayur, *op.cit.*, pp.264-268.



In times when Aurangzeb refrained from plunder, he instituted a stringent system of land taxation. Peasants were obligated to remit fifty percent of their agricultural output to the Mughal administration, thereby contributing significantly to revenue generation. Moreover, they obtained credit support to augment production. Peasants who improved their production capabilities consequently remitted higher taxes. Sivaji intensified his military endeavors by leveraging this significant tax revenue. In 1674, he received a coronation akin to that of an Indian monarch. He rendered the religious dimension of his military campaign more pronounced and initiated opposition to Muslim governance in the interests of the indigenous population. Conversely, Aurangzeb's rejection of his predecessors' policy of tolerance and the reintroduction of the jizya tax intensified religious dissent. Subsequently, Sivaji initiated a military campaign in Tanjore—South India, where his domain was situated. During this campaign, he obtained support from the Qutb Shahi sultan; however, he refrained from establishing an alliance with the Muslim population. Nevertheless, as Aurangzeb was esteemed as a champion of Islam and Sivaji as a proponent of Hinduism, the conflict between them mirrored this distinction. Sivaji, who died in 1680, was unable to realise all of his dreams prior to his death. Had he of survived, he would have surely widened his borders in spite of the Qutb Shahis and the Adil Shahis. However, these sultanates would subsequently be conquered by Aurangzeb.[77]

Aurangzeb persisted in his residence in the Deccan from 1681 until his demise. The Adil Shahis reclaimed their capital, Bijapur, in 1686. Although Sivaji's son, Sambhaji, was assassinated, the Maratha offensives against the Mughals persisted. Despite the inability to establish robust authority in the Deccan during the latter years of Aurangzeb's reign, the region incurred considerable economic detriment. Aurangzeb sought to preserve amicable relations with the Turkic states in the northern regions without pursuing any political advantages. Relations with the Safavids were unfavorable during this time. The conflict between the two states culminated with the demise of ruler Shah Abbas. In contrast to his father Shah Jahan, Aurangzeb exhibited no inclination to cultivate amicable relations with the Ottoman Empire. He even declined to acknowledge an emissary dispatched by the Ottomans. While not explicitly referenced in available sources, this phenomenon may be ascribed to Aurangzeb's manifestation of a grandeur complex. Conversely, he endeavored to cultivate positive relations with the Sharifs of Mecca, who were

[77] Kulke-Rothermund, *op.cit.*, p.298.

under Ottoman protection, as well as with the governors of Basra. Aurangzeb, who passed away on March 3, 1707, is interred in Huldabad, situated near Aurangabad.[78]

The Decline and Fall of the Empire

Following the demise of Aurangzeb, he was survived by his three sons: Muazzam Shah Alam Bahadur, who held the position of Governor of Kabul, Muhammad Azam Shah, who had engaged in the Maratha conflict alongside his father; and Kam Bakhsh, who served as the Governor of Bijapur. The princes garnered support, however, neither of the two factions within the state demonstrated allegiance to them. The leadership of the initial faction was comprised of Asad Khan and his son Zulfiqar Khan, whereas the second faction was led by Aurangzeb's commanders, Gazi-ud-Din Khan Firuz-i Jang and Chin Kilich Khan. The competition for the throne during this era exhibited distinct characteristics compared to earlier periods. In fact, rather than establishing alliances with the throne contenders, these two factions were predominantly engaged in the pursuit of their individual objectives. Firuz-i Jang, instead of participating in the conflict, considered it more suitable to await the emergence of the victor. Muhammad Azam was in close proximity to the palace at the time of his father's passing. He promptly returned upon learning of the developments. Despite obtaining the endorsement of Asad Khan, he failed to persuade Firuz-i Jang. Abandoning his artillery, Azam advanced northward to engage his sibling. On June 18, 1707, they encountered Muazzam Khan. Azam Shah was overcome and died in this battle. However, the factions sided with Muazzam Shah.[79]

Muazzam Shah governed the state under the title of Bahadur Shah. The initial years of his reign were characterized by turmoil. His brother Kam Bakhsh engaged in rebellion, culminating in a conflict near Hyderabad, where Kam Bakhsh was captured and subsequently perished shortly thereafter. Bahadur Shah addressed rebellions initiated by the Rajputs, Marathas, and Sikhs, effectively suppressing their uprisings. Following the suppression of the Sikh rebellion, he returned to Lahore and passed away on February 28, 1712. During his five-year governance, Bahadur Shah primarily preserved the integrity of the state and notably extended its boundaries to the outermost regions of the Deccan. He was a just, merciful, courageous,

78 Khaliq Ahmad Nizami, "Evrengzîb", *DİA*, XI, (1995), p.537.

79 Dougles, *op.cit.*, p.240.



generous, and courteous leader; however, he possessed limited expertise in governmental matters. As a member of the Shia sect, he advocated for the inclusion of Imam Ali's name in the khutbas. The Sunni factions expressed their disapproval of this. Notwithstanding Bahadur Shah's efforts to appeal to the Sunnis by referencing reports indicating that the Prophet Muhammad had designated Hz. Ali as caliph, he was unsuccessful in convincing them. In response to increasing public discontent regarding this matter and the alignment of his son Azim-ush-Shan with Sunni views, he relinquished this determination. Bahadur Shah was a monarch who esteemed erudition. The Ghazi-ud-Din and Khan Firuz Jang madrasas were established during his rule.[80]

Following the demise of Bahadur Shah, a competition for succession ensued among his four sons. Initially, Azim-ush-Shan passed away, followed by the demise of his two siblings. Cihandar, having vanquished his siblings, ascended to the position of sovereign. Nevertheless, his rule was transient as a result of his preoccupation with pleasure and luxury. He was overthrown and assassinated by his nephew Farrukh Siyar, who had garnered backing from the prominent Sayyid brothers of the time. Subsequently, Farrukh Siyar sought to eradicate the Sayyid brothers who had facilitated his ascension to power; however, his efforts proved unsuccessful. The Sayyid brothers, after assuming control of the apparatus of power, regarded Farrukh Siyar as a peril to their authority and, as a result, orchestrated his demise. Following this occurrence, they sequentially installed Rafi-ud-Darajat, Rafi-ud-Daulah, and Muhammad Shah on the throne. This seizure of authority elicited responses from the Turaniyans, a distinguished group of Turkish ancestry. Under the guidance of Chin Bahadur Khan, who is of Turkish origin, a campaign was launched that culminated in the termination of the Sayyid brothers' dominance. Subsequently, Chin Bahadur, designated as vizier, usurped authority. After Chin Bahadur's demise two months later, Muhammad Shah appointed Chin Qilich Khan, who was then serving in the Deccan, as vizier.[81]

The final influential ruler of the Mughal dynasty, Nasir-ud-Din Muhammad, assumed the throne on September 29, 1719. Supported by the Sayyids, he governed the state for three decades. Nadir Shah, the establisher of the Afshar dynasty in Iran, engaged in conflicts with the Mughals regarding the matter of Kandahar. Following the Ghilzais, who sought asylum in India and received support

[80] Ahmet Taşağıl, "Bahadır Şah I", *DİA*, IV, (1991), p.455.

[81] Andican, *op.cit.*, p.591.



from Nasir-ud-Din, Nadir Shah launched an invasion of Kabul in 1738 and subsequently targeted Delhi in 1739.[82] The Allahabad Treaty, executed during the reign of Shah Alam, solidified the British presence in India into a more permanent form. The Sepoy Rebellion of 1857, along with various events that transpired during the rule of Bahadur Shah II, the son of Akbar II, significantly contributed to the eventual dissolution of the Mughal Empire. Nadir Shah amassed considerable wealth from India and transported it to Iran, while Nasir-ud-Din endeavored to foster peace within his nation. Following the assassination of Nadir Shah, Ahmed Shah Durrani, belonging to the Abdali tribe, ascended to power with the backing of the Afghan population. Throughout this time, the Afghans conducted incursions into Punjab, which fell within the Mughal territories. The troops sent by Nasir-ud-Din were vanquished in the vicinity of Sirhind, and his son perished in the conflict. Subsequent to Nasir-ud-Din's demise on April 16, 1748, the Mughal Empire experienced a precipitous decline. The nation was invaded by the Marathas, the Pindaris, and the British, the latter being armed with firearms. The Sindhis, Punjabis, Kashmiris, Bengalis, and South Indian Rajas asserted control over their respective territories in response to this invasion.[83] India was incorporated into the British Empire in 1858, and in 1877, Queen Victoria was officially proclaimed Empress of India.[84] On this occasion, the centuries-old Turkish political existence in India and the Mughal Empire, which had ruled a large part of India for over three hundred years, ended.

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82 Enver Konukçu, "Bâbürlüler", *DİA*, IV, (1991) pp.402-403.

83 Enver Konukçu, "Bâbürlüler", *DİA*, IV (1991), pp.402-403.

84 Mübarek Galip-Saadettin Y. Gömeç, *Hindistan'da Türkler*, Berikan Publishers, Ankara 2013, p.118.



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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Babur Shah at the beginning of the 17th century.



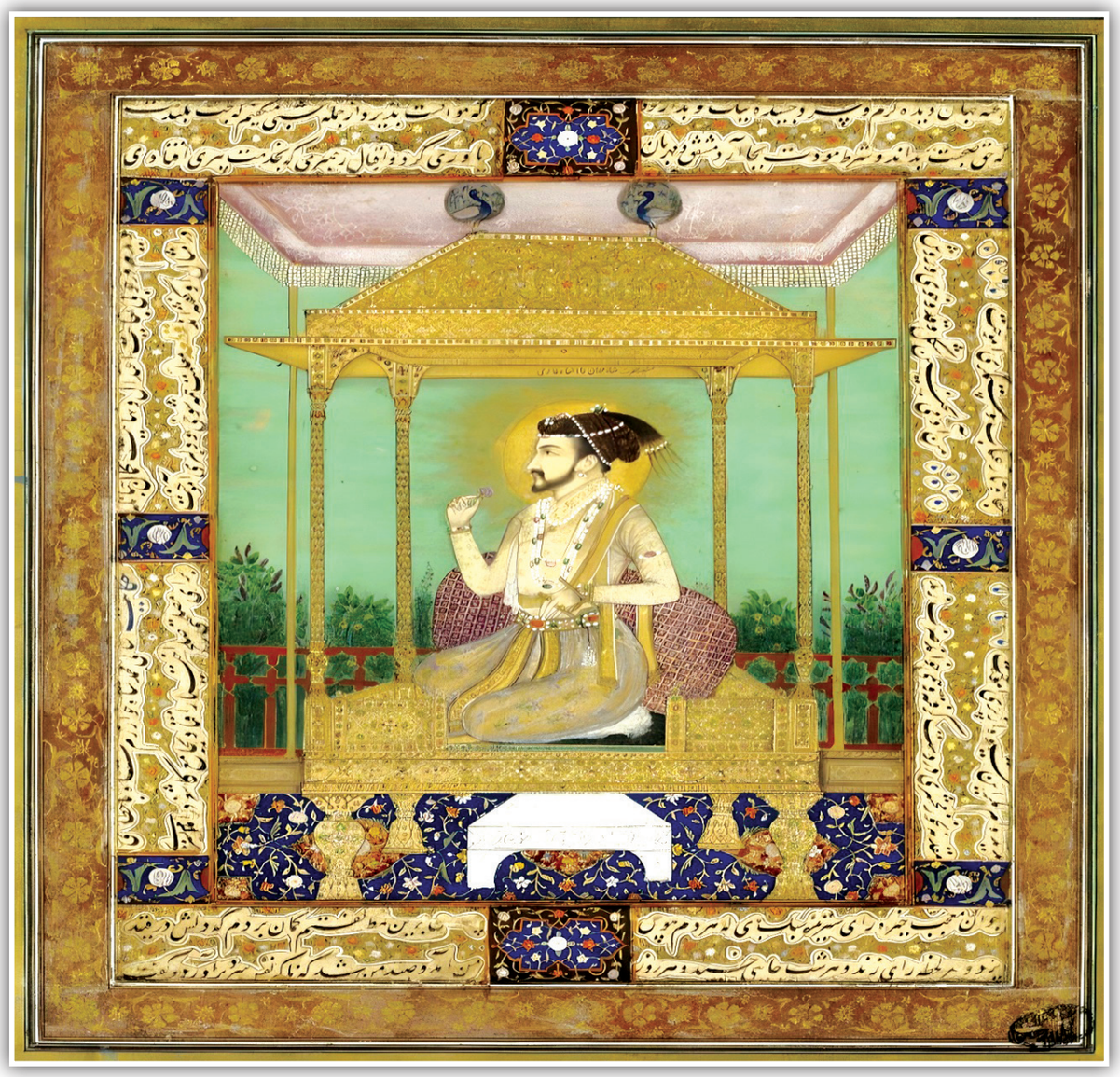
Source: British Museum "Babur Shah" No: 1921,1011,0.3.

Appendix 2: A miniature painting depicting the Battle of Panipat, late 16th century.



Source: Charles Joppen, *Historical Atlas of India*, Longsman, Green and Co., London 1914, p. 18.

Appendix 3: A 19th-century illustration depicting Shah Jahan seated on the famous Peacock Throne



Source: Victoria & Albert Museum, No: IM.113-1921.

Appendix 4: A Mughal miniature depicting the Timurid dynasty collectively, dating to approximately the 18th century. Timur is shown at the center; on the left are Miran Shah, Abu Sa'id Mirza, Babur, Akbar, and Shah Jahan. On the right are Muhammad Sultan, Umar Shaikh, Hümâyun, Jahangir, and Aurangzeb.



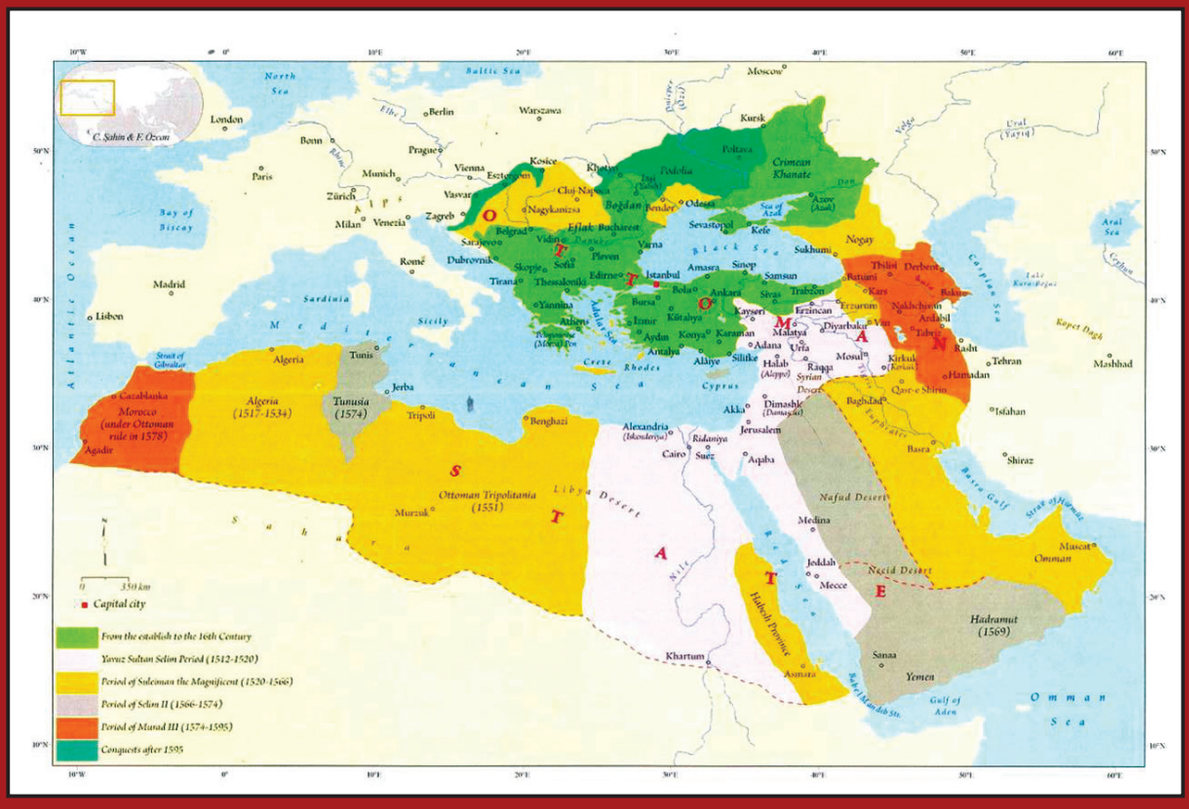
Source: The Khalili Collections, No: MSS 874.

Appendix 5: Akbar Shah crossing the Ganges River on an elephant, late 16th century



Source: Victoria & Albert Museum, No: S. 2:60-1896.

The Ottoman State



Source: *The Historical Atlas of Turkic States*, ed. Prof. Dr. Azmi Özcan, Prof. Dr. Fahameddin Başar, trans. Fatih İkiz, Turkish Academy of Sciences Ankara, Turkic Culture Service Foundation Istanbul 2025, p. 212.



THE OTTOMAN STATE

(1302-1922)

Yüksel ÇELİK*

Ottoman history can be considered to be the history not only of the old world but also of many new states established in the regions that were once part of the Ottoman Empire. At the beginning of the 14th century, in the region of Bithynia (Northwestern Anatolia, comprising of Bursa, Kocaeli, and adjacent territories), the Osmanoğulları, thereafter recognized as the Ottoman emirate, began to manifest as a significant political and military force in close proximity to the Eastern Roman (Byzantine) Empire. Ruled as one empire, this Turkish entity persisted for over six centuries. Its political and military successes were complemented by effective and logical administrative, legal, social, and cultural policies, facilitating its emergence as the de facto successor to the Roman Empire in the "old world." The Ottomans established an extended era of stability referred to as the Pax Ottomana and successfully administered a variety of ethnic and religious communities for centuries. The extensive geographical boundaries and the enduring nature of its sovereignty highlights the breath of this political entity: Anatolia, the Balkans, and Central Europe; the northern coasts of the Black Sea; the area stretching from the Caspian coasts to Basra and

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the Red Sea; North Africa, including Egypt, Sudan, and the Maghreb, reaching modern-day Ethiopia; the Bilād al-Shām region, which includes Syria, Palestine, Lebanon, Jordan, and their adjacent areas; and the Arabian Peninsula, referred to as the Šibh al-Jazīrah al-'Arabīyah. In this respect, Ottoman history can be viewed as the historical narrative not only of the ancient world but also of numerous contemporary states that have emerged in these areas.

From Frontier Beylik to Empire

In the Late Middle Ages, the Osmanoğulları arose as a frontier principality in Northwestern Anatolia. A scholarly consensus exists regarding the view that they were members of the Kayı (Kayıg) tribe of the Oghuz Turks. Similar to other Turkmen who sought refuge from the Mongol invasions that devastated Transoxiana (Maveraünnehir), they migrated westward into Anatolia. In the 11th century, following their establishment in the vicinity of Ahlat and its environs, they progressively extended their presence into inland areas including Eskişehir, Kütahya, and Ankara, eventually establishing themselves near Söğüt and Domaniç—regions designated as their homeland by the Seljuk State. During the initial phase, the leader of this Turkmen tribe was Gündüz Alp, succeeded by his son and heir, Ertuğrul Gazi. Osman Bey, who would serve as the namesake of the principality as its founder, promptly endowed this community—a legacy inherited from his grandfather Gündüz Alp and father Ertuğrul Gazi—with a unique political identity.

In the 13th century, as the Mongols advanced towards the borders of Anatolia, the Anatolian Seljuk State, whose vulnerability was heightened by the Bābā'ī Rebellion (1240), experienced a serious setback at the hands of the Mongols three years later at the Battle of Köse Dağ. As the century progressed, with alterations in political dynamics and a decline in Mongol authority in Anatolia, the Turkmen, ostensibly remaining under the rule of the Anatolian Seljuks, acted independently in political and military spheres. Consequently, a new epoch characterized by upheaval and conflict began, referred to as the Period of Beyliks (Tavā'if-i Mulūk).

The Ottoman Beylik represented a political entity established and elevated to prominence during this transformative period. Similar to previous entities, it was inherent that this structure emerged in areas distant from the political-military



hubs of Seljuk-Mongol governance, more specifically, in the "frontier" regions. Initially supported by diverse Turkmen groups that migrated to Anatolia during the Great Turkish Migration, the Ottoman Beylik expanded over time through the inclusion of warriors from various ethnic and religious backgrounds, advancing from the Söğüt-Domaniç-Bilecik axis to establish its presence in the Sakarya River basin and along the Iznik line. A significant contributor to this progression was the extensive offensive undertaken by the Turkmens from the western borderlands against Byzantine territories, stretching from the lower Sakarya valley to Ephesus, during the years 1299 to 1301. This overarching situation, which developed at the close of the 13th century and was regarded as a significant threat along the Byzantine frontier, was predominantly embodied by the robust strength of the Ottoman Beylik. At the onset of the new century, specifically on July 27, 1302, Osman Bey achieved considerable fame by eliminating an imperial military contingent dispatched by the emperor near Koyunhisar Castle in the vicinity of Izmit, at a site referred to as Bafeus—although the precise composition of the imperial force remains unclear. In line with the narratives of Georges Pachymeres, the groups who perceive this victory as the inception of the Ottoman Beylik's formation has been progressively growing. In the historiography of politics, specific dates function as significant milestones and are indispensable. Consequently, with respect to the date of emergence, it is imperative to bear in mind both the year 1299—as indicated by the earliest Ottoman sources citing independence from the Ilkhanate, a Mongol state located in Iran—and the year 1302, which signifies the notable victory at Bafeus, as interrelated and mutually supportive developments. Given that the inception of such political entities is not a singular simple event, it is wise to view the foundation of the polity as a process of formation, and to observe that by the early 14th century, the Osmanoğulları had emerged as one of the leading political-military forces in the region.

In the century subsequent to its foundational period, this socio-political framework, which would eventually develop into the empire and transition into the so-called Classical Era (1300–1600), cannot be attributed solely to nomadic vigor and the camaraderie of soldiers ("gazis" fighting collectively, "companions of the path," and "strange heroes"). The conception of a "conquering state rapidly emerging from a tribe of 400 tents," nor, as Gibbon's imaginative assertion proposes, the emergence of a "new race and new nation" through the

amalgamation of Ottomans with local non-Muslim groups, particularly Greeks, did not transpire. Conversely, it was the Oghuz tradition (töre), the Alp culture (characterized by skilled commanders leading Turkmen warriors on campaigns to peripheral regions), and the ethos of conquest and gaza (holy war) originating from the notions of kut and Islamic faith (including raiding and frontier lordship), combined with the cultural synthesis between Iran and Turan formed in Anatolia. Alongside the civil and military elements that comprised this heritage, that influenced the political identity, orientation, and swift advancement of this Turkmen tribe of Khwarezmian origin. Furthermore, the pragmatic political relationships established by the Ottomans with Sufi groups, representatives of artisans, Batini sects, and local authorities along the Byzantine border also bolstered this process. It is widely recognized that substantial groups do not spontaneously transform into societies, nor do military structures emerge through mere chance; consequently, it is evident that the impetus driving them towards a unified objective and necessitating collaborative action within a defined hierarchy and discipline is sustained by both "cause" and "lineage-based group solidarity" (asabiyyah).

The founder of the Ottoman beylik Osman Gazi (r. 1302–1324), together with his son Orhan Bey in his later years, took several important strongholds, fortresses, and mountain passes. The primary strategic priorities were Bursa (Prusa ad Olympum) and İznik (Nicaea). After his father's death in 1324, Orhan Bey focused on achieving these objectives and subsequently captured Bursa in 1326. With the victory at Pelekanon in 1329 and the conquest of İznik in 1331, the Ottoman Beylik took a clear step in its transformation from an emirate into a state. The treaty set in motion in 1333 to end the siege of Izmit (Nikomedia), wherein the Byzantine Emperor consented to pay tribute to the Ottomans, serves as a significant measure of their increasing power. Indeed, the capture of Izmit in 1337 definitively established regional superiority, and the transition to statehood was formally acknowledged.

In the dictionary, the term "şimal" is described as referring to the primary and intercardinal directions of north and northwest. As narrated in Şinasi's account, "The sword of Osman consistently points northward, akin to a magnetic compass," the scope of the Ottoman State had now expanded to encompass Gallipoli, Thrace, and Rumelia. The accomplishments attained during the rule of Orhan Bey (r. 1324-1362), in conjunction with the equilibrium established



in Anatolia and the political dynamics in Byzantium, established a foundation for significant progress through strategically formulated foreign policies predicated on both conflict and partnerships. Military campaigns aimed at Gallipoli and Thrace, the construction of defensive infrastructure around Edirne, the formation of a pact with Umur Bey of the Aydınid dynasty for collaborative military campaigns against Byzantium, and the establishment of amicable relations with John VI Kantakouzenos, who was contending for the Byzantine throne, comprised of integral components of this strategic framework. In contrast to various Muslim groups, the Ottomans maintained enduring and definitive objectives for the region, implementing strategic actions rather than engaging in looting and pillaging. These objectives and strategies were further developed in the following period through the implementation of a policy aimed at establishing Turkish populations in the Balkans.

Beginning in the mid-14th century, the policy of conquest, which had acquired momentum on the Rumelia front after the Gallipoli Peninsula, adopted a new dimension with the seizure of Edirne by Crown Prince Murad (Murad I) in 1361, during the lifetime of Orhan Gazi. The still vulnerable frontier regions were bolstered by a strategic settlement policy that incorporated exile when deemed necessary. Akıncı families, including the Malkoçoğulları, Mihaloğulları, and Evrenosoğulları, played a crucial role in expediting the progression from Western Thrace into more inland regions. The Ottomans, seeking lasting settlement in the newly obtained territories, implemented a strategy referred to as "istimalet," which fundamentally encompassed a conciliatory and cooperative methodology—rhetorically beneficial and politically moderate—to promote coexistence and reconciliation. In other words, through the adept utilization of various instruments of soft power focused on justice, they acquired the trust and approval of the local populace. The function of gazi-dervishes (Turkish colonizing dervishes), the zaviyas (small religious lodges) that acted as gentle contact points with the "other," and the revitalization of the region through land, grants and foundations not being neglected in this settlement and expansion endeavor.

During the rule of Murad I (r. 1362–1389), subsequent to the capture of Edirne, the acquisition of Plovdiv (Filibe) in 1363 resulted in the lessening of Serbian and Bulgarian spheres of influence in the Balkan region. The defeat of the anti-Ottoman coalition in the battles of Sırp Sındığı (the Battle of Maritsa) and Çirmen (Battle of Chernomen), which occurred near Edirne's northwest

over the subsequent decade, expedited the cycle of conquests (futuhat). Concurrently, a political-administrative and social structure commenced its formation in the region, aligning with these developments, which would subsequently be referred to as the dâire-i adliyye (circle of justice). After securing these victories, no impediments remained for the Ottomans in the regions of Macedonia, Serbia, and Greece; consequently, Kosovo and Sofia emerged as new objectives.

The First Battle of Kosovo (1389), which resulted in the martyrdom of Murad I, was a critical event in which Prince Bayezid, leading the army's right wing, demonstrated exceptional valor. With the exception of the Hungarians situated south of the Danube, all other competitors were eradicated. This victory ensured the entry of the Ottomans into Northern Serbia and afforded them the chance to establish settlements in the southern Balkans. With the Kosovo victory and the accomplishments during the rule of Yıldırım Bayezid, the Bulgarian Kingdom and the Despotate of Dobruja were abolished, and a definitive victory was attained over the Crusaders at Nicopolis in 1396. These consecutive triumphs reinforced Ottoman hegemony in the Balkans, established a foundation for the progressive Islamization of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Albania, and institutionalized the interchangeable use of the terms "Turkishness" and "Islam" in Western perception. The newly designated objective was now Constantinople; however, it was first necessary to restore the political equilibrium in Anatolia in a manner that presented no peril to the Ottoman Empire. In this context, the military campaign launched by Murad I to integrate the Anatolian beyliks into a confederative framework under Ottoman leadership was successfully concluded during the rule of Yıldırım Bayezid through a rigid and unyielding methodology predicated on unconditional subservience. Consequently, a century following the formation of the beylik, the Ottomans had extended their influence to regions bordered by the Hungarians in Central Europe and the Mamluks in the East, established unequivocal supremacy in Anatolia and the Balkans, and placed the capture of Istanbul on their agenda.

The swift progression of the Ottomans and their aspirations to seize the capital of the Eastern Roman Empire to establish a New Rome were significantly impeded by an emergent power that had not been adequately considered: The Timurids. Emir Timur (d. 1405) possessed a distinguished record comparable to that of Yıldırım Bayezid. Within a brief period, he successfully subjugated an extensive region encompassing Khwarezm, the Fergana Valley, the



Desht-i Kipchak, the Golden Horde, Khorasan, and parts of Northern India. Following the defeat of the Jalayirids, who governed western Iran and northern Iraq, he established his supremacy over the Akkoyunlu and Karakoyunlu, and by the close of the 14th century, he had advanced to the boundaries of Anatolia as a marshal of considerable authority. Despite his acceptance of surrender under assurances of safety (aman), the systematic massacre of populations in Sivas and in Damascus and Aleppo, regions under Mamluk governance, constituted an effort by Emir Timur to incite terror and apprehension, ultimately compelling the Ottomans to yield to his authority. The increasing conflict between Yıldırım and Timur, conveyed through diplomatic emissaries and written correspondence, ultimately culminated in an intense confrontation in the vicinity of the Çubuk Stream Valley and Kızılcaköy Creek near Ankara on July 28, 1402. Ultimately, Emir Timur attained a complete victory, and Yıldırım Bayezid was taken prisoner.

Timur was acutely cognizant of the importance of his accomplishment and honored it by dispatching letters of victory (zafernâmes) to King Charles VII of France and King Henry IV of England. Consequently, due to this defeat, the Türkmen confederation operating under Ottoman authority in Anatolia disintegrated, the centralized framework collapsed, and the capture of besieged Istanbul was postponed by fifty years. This era was characterized by succession conflicts among the princes and the commencement of disorder and upheaval referred to in Ottoman history as the Interregnum (Fetret Devri) from 1402 to 1413. The Interregnum, which nearly led to the dissolution of the Ottoman State, concluded when Mehmed Çelebi achieved control over the rival princes and ascended to the position of the sole sovereign of the Ottoman throne as Mehmed I. Consequently, by July 1413, political and military stability was reestablished in Anatolia and Rumelia. During this era, in accordance with the principles of realpolitik, a temperate policy was adopted regarding Venice, Genoa, and Byzantium, while increased efforts were directed towards the restoration of unity in Anatolia and the re-establishment and fortification of Ottoman control over the beyliks.

Murad's reign (r. 1421-44 / 1446-51), as evidenced by the dates, was characterized by considerable turmoil, notably featuring his abdication in favor of his son, Mehmed II. While the capture of Thessaloniki in 1430 generated considerable enthusiasm, it did not lead to any subsequent advancements. The turmoil

induced by the Interregnum (Fetret Devri) in Anatolia, the impending Mongol threat just beyond the border, and the reemergence of forces in the Balkans—which had previously been entirely subordinate during the reign of Bayezid I but now, through new coalitions and alliances, aimed to recover lost territories—rendered it imperative to stabilize the state by finalizing numerous treaties with this extensive opposition front. The prudent policy of Çandarlı Halil Pasha significantly impacted this choice. Murad II's abdication in August 1444 at Mihaliç, in the presence of the Kapıkulu troops and the beys, in favor of his twelve-year-old son Mehmed II (the Conqueror), sought to alleviate the unrest generated by the crisis and subsequent withdrawal. When the anti-Ottoman coalition advanced across the Danube towards Varna, seeking to capitalize on the succession of a minor ruler, the former sultan was convinced by prominent statesmen to resume command of the military. Consequently, the Battle of Varna (1444) culminated in a victory for the Ottoman forces. This achievement reinstated the state's dignity and amplified appeals for the former sultan to regain the throne from his minor son. After the Janissary revolt in 1444 (known as the Buçuktepe Rebellion), Murad II resumed his reign over the Ottoman Empire. The triumphs at Varna in 1444 and the Second Battle of Kosovo in 1448 not only affirmed the conclusion of the Interregnum but also illustrated that the Ottomans had recovered their previous control in the Balkan region.

II.Murad was a ruler who valued scientific activities and scholars (such as Molla Yegan, Molla Gürânî, Alâeddin Tûsî, Şerefeddin Kırımî, Alâeddin Semerkandî, Muhammad and Ali from the Yazıcıoğlu family, among others), as well as the Turkish language and culture. In this context, the work compiled by Yazıcıoğlu Ali at the sultan's request, entitled *Târîh-i Âl-i Selçuk* (also known as *Tevârîh-i Âl-i Selçuk*, *Selçuknâme, Oğuznâme*), is noteworthy. The first steps toward establishing Turkish as an official identity through its use in bureaucracy and the formation of prose style were also taken during his reign. According to the observations of İnalcık and Emecen, "His adherence to the Oğuz-Turkmen tradition and the clearer remembrance of roots were also influenced by the aim to block the Timurid influence in Anatolia." The presence of bards reciting the Dede Korkut epic at the palace and the attribution of the Kayı tamga (tribal emblem) on coins, weapons, and certain objects should be evaluated within this sensitivity. II. Murad especially patronized the Zeyniyye, Mevleviyye, and particularly the Bayramiyye orders, which he regarded as significant for political



legitimacy and social unity. During his reign, the Ottoman presence in Anatolia and the Balkans was indisputably consolidated, thus laying a favorable groundwork for his son II. Mehmed's (the Conqueror's) policy of conquest.

A New Empire Arises from the Old World (1453-1566)

The mid-15th century was characterized by considerable advancements for the Ottoman Empire. With the ascension of II. Mehmed (reigned 1444-46, 1451-81), the expansionist policies envisioned by Yıldırım Bayezid and the seizure of Constantinople, the capital of the Eastern Roman Empire, once again emerged as primary priorities. At the commencement of his second reign in 1451, II. Mehmed initially negotiated a truce with the Hungarians, subsequently integrating the Serbian Despotate and the Kingdom of Bosnia into the Ottoman sphere. Throughout his reign, the hawkish faction, directed by Zağanos and Şehabeddin Pashas, asserted that the prudent policies of his predecessor, II. Murad, had suppressed the fervor of holy war (gaza), whereas the moderate faction, led by Çandarlı Halil Pasha, deemed the conquest of Constantinople as both premature and perilous. As corroborated by contemporary domestic and international sources, II. Mehmed, motivated by aspirations of global hegemony (cihangirlik), proclaimed his intention to besiege the Byzantine capital as an assertion of his presence (ispat-ı vücut), initiating subsequent preparations. During the 54-day siege from April 6 to May 29, II. Mehmed exhibited remarkable composure notwithstanding accounts of formidable city walls and the impending arrival of Hungarian and Crusader fleets aimed at offering support. Following a challenging siege, on May 29, 1453, the Ottoman forces successfully entered Constantinople. This occurrence, which garnered international attention and reinforced Mehmed II's supreme authority, is generally acknowledged as the initiation of the Ottomans' evolution from a state to an empire. Consequently, II. Mehmed amalgamated the regions within Anatolia and Rumelia and was bestowed with the title "Fatih" (the Conqueror). It is widely acknowledged that following this victory, he adopted the title Kayser-i Rum, indicating his position as the successor to the Roman Empire, and that a significant new period in the political history of the world had begun. This event, regarded as a victory that bestowed leadership upon the Ottomans within the Islamic sphere, was lauded and nearly consecrated within the discourse of conquest.



THE OTTOMAN STATE

The "Turkish Anxiety" resulting from the capture of Istanbul transformed the political dynamics in the Balkans and Europe, leading to a notable increase in Crusader propaganda. In an attempt to prevent this, Fatih successfully disrupted a potential alliance in 1454 by negotiating distinct treaties with the Venetians and Genoese and conferring specific political and commercial advantages. Comparable suggestions were presented to the Knights of Rhodes; however, no outcomes were realized. As a result, the newly established objectives included Rhodes and Belgrade in the Western region and the Empire of Trebizond in the Eastern region. In the pursuit of his aspiration for global hegemony, Mehmed II employed strategic measures to hinder the formation of a unified opposition by his adversaries. It may be asserted that he achieved this through the prompt negotiation of treaties and concessions. His emphasis on Belgrade originated from his perception of complete control over Serbia as both a safeguard and a significant setback for the Hungarians. Nevertheless, events transpired contrary to expectations: the siege of Belgrade concluded unsuccessfully (1456), and Fatih's minor injury on the battlefield offered optimism to the Crusaders. One year later, the setback in Albania significantly bolstered the optimism of his adversaries. The acquisition of the Morea Peninsula in 1460 did provide a modest improvement in morale; moreover, the ensuing campaigns in Trabzon, Kaffa, Wallachia, Lesbos, and Bosnia were successfully executed over the following three years. In reaction to this swift progression, the Hungarians, Venetians, and Burgundians entered into an alliance treaty in 1463, motivated by the Papacy. Subsequent to the conflicts that commenced in the autumn of the same year, hegemony was restored in the Morea Peninsula, Serbia, Wallachia, Bosnia, and Albania (1467). Thereafter, Uzun Hasan, the Bey of the Akkoyunlu—who had taken part in extensive negotiations for alliances with enemies of the Ottomans and who, notwithstanding support from the Crusaders, was defeated at Erzincan-Tercan, Otlukbeli in 1473—was eliminated. In this triumph, the preeminence of the Ottoman military in firearms proved to be a critical factor, illustrating that traditional weaponry and the conventional Turkmen-Mongol combat techniques were inadequate against such forces. The elimination of the Akkoyunlu dynasty strengthened Anatolian unity and smoothed the transition to take control over Eastern Anatolia, particularly its trade routes, through the start of initiatives to assert control over the Black Sea.



Image 1: Mehmed the Conqueror's Entry into Istanbul: (https://ttk.gov.tr/Istanbulun-fethi/)

Following the conquest, the Black Sea and surrounding regions became critical for the security of the Ottoman capital, the oversight of trade routes originating from the northern steppes and terminating at the Black Sea, ultimately extending to Istanbul, along with the provisioning and military logistics essential for the capital's functioning. Therefore, the principal aims encompassed the governance of the Danube region, the Crimean Peninsula, and the Latin colonies, as well as the assimilation of adjacent states into the Ottoman Empire, with the goal of converting the Black Sea into an enclosed body of water. The conquest of Kaffa and Azov in 1475, along with the removal of Genoese influence in the area, the establishment of security along the Trabzon-Tabriz trade route, and the ascension of Mengli Giray—who vowed fidelity to Ottoman

sovereignty—to the Crimean throne, fulfilled these objectives. Moreover, the establishment of a military garrison at the mouth of the Don River ensured the establishment of a significant strategic and military base on the northern front.

During the concluding years of Fatih's reign, Ottoman endeavors in the Western region concentrated on two primary objectives: Italy, to establish control in the Adriatic Sea, and the strategically vital island of Rhodes, aimed at achieving Mediterranean supremacy. The siege of Rhodes occurred initially in 1480; however, owing to robust resistance, Ottoman forces subsequently shifted their focus to Otranto in Apulia/Puglia, where they achieved victory. Nevertheless, the demise of Sultan Mehmed II in 1481, along with the resulting internal strife, hindered the prolongation of the thirteen-month Ottoman control established in the southeastern region of the Italian Peninsula.

The period of Fatih signifies the transformation of the Ottoman Empire from a state into an empire. The introduction of this extensive scale, encompassing administrative, social, and economic dimensions, inherently required the reevaluation of traditional notions and institutions of sovereignty. For a conqueror aspiring to world dominion, the prevailing framework—structured around faith and tradition—considerably constrained his operational flexibility, necessitating a reinterpretation within the domains of "rational attitude" (tavr-ı akl) and "customary law" (örfî hukuk). The classical Ottoman period would be established on this revitalized framework. As articulated in the Fatih Kanunnamesi (Law Code of Mehmed the Conqueror), which conferred legislative authority to the sultan (siyaset-i sultânî, yasağ-ı padişâhî), this emergent patrimonial sovereignty provided the foundation for a centralized and powerful regime. The resolute and transformative reforms started by a sultan intent on enhancing centralization inevitably elicited responses from conservative circles oriented toward maintaining the status quo. A principal critique articulated by the opposition involved the redistribution of unutilized land, particularly mülk and vakıf properties, in the form of dirliks (land grants), the expansion of the sultan's authority through customary law and organizational kanunnames, the adoption of titles that signify power, the commissioning of self-portraits on medallions, and the engagement of foreign painters to create his portraits. These practices functioned as key evidence for individuals in opposition to him.

Subsequent to the rule of Mehmed II (the Conqueror), the empire exhibited the characteristics of a substantial and rapidly advancing entity that, upon encountering



impediments, found it necessary to halt and recuperate. During the tenure of his successor, Bayezid II (r. 1481–1512), a degree of stability was attained primarily by accommodating the requests of the opposition. This was accomplished through limiting the application of customary law (örfi hukuk), reverting to traditional elements in both the practical and symbolic dimensions of power and authority, offering concessions regarding vakıf (endowment) lands, and significantly cultivating an unequivocal rapport with Sufi communities. Therefore, Bayezid II was bestowed with the notable epithet "Velî" (the Saint), distinguishing him from his predecessor Mehmed II, who epitomized the concept of conquest and global control. Nevertheless, the aspirations of his brother, Şehzade Cem, who contested the throne and was eventually defeated, significantly undermined the imperial prestige and claims of global sovereignty that had been established during the reigns of both his predecessor and their father. Şehzade Cem initially sought refuge in Egypt and subsequently, in 1482, sought asylum with the Knights of Rhodes. The confinement of the dissident prince on Rhodes, victoryby a significant financial contribution and commercial advantages from the Ottoman Empire, along with the subsequent expansion of this issue into Europe—where his asylum evolved into a perpetually fluctuating instrument of blackmail and negotiation—played a role in extending this shadow over the empire. The relinquishment of pivotal strategic locations, including Otranto in southeastern Italy, along with its Ottoman garrison, was fundamentally linked to the existing conditions and the continued utilization of this influence. This restrained and unassuming foreign policy endured until the demise of the insurgent prince in 1495. The circumstances on the eastern front presented comparable difficulties; the Mamluks supporting Şehzade Cem were embroiled in a prolonged conflict with the Ottomans in Çukurova for six years (1485–1491), during which neither faction achieved a definitive advantage. Furthermore, the complete supremacy achieved by Mehmed II in Anatolia experienced significant setbacks during this era.

Owing to the exceptional successes of two prominent figures in Ottoman history, Mehmed II (the Conqueror) and Selim I (the Grim), the rule of Bayezid II is occasionally perceived as a relatively unremarkable era. Nevertheless, the period of Bayezid II cannot be accurately described as one of complete disorder, banditry, retreat, surrender, or decline. The Şehzade Cem Affair markedly constrained the Ottomans' operational flexibility for a considerable duration; however,

the maintenance of goals in Eastern and Central Europe, the advancement of naval capabilities to ensure control in the Mediterranean, along with campaigns in Moldavia, Morea, and Albania, collectively illustrate that strategic actions were implemented when required. Moreover, endeavors to establish a centralized state politically and bureaucratically persisted without diminution. Following the demise of Şehzade Cem (1495), the elimination of the blackmail element of the resolution of outstanding disputes with Venice and Hungary, while also prompting the establishment of diplomatic relations with Russia and Spain. Nevertheless, when the Safavid's intentions to invade Anatolia and their Shiite propaganda aimed at the Turkmen escalated to perilous levels, political priorities underwent another shift. The progression of the Safavids to Ankara and the discourse delivered in Tokat in the name of Shah Ismail exemplify the seriousness of the peril. This threat, exemplified by the Şahkulu Baba Tekeli Rebellion in 1511, ultimately resulted in Bayezid II losing both his throne and his life.

When Bayezid II was forced to relinquish the throne in 1512, a renewed succession crisis emerged among the princes. Şehzade Selim, the Sanjak Bey of Trabzon, garnered the backing of the Janissaries and prevailed over his brothers Ahmed and Korkut, ascending to the position of sultan (April 24, 1512). Referred to in contemporary sources as Selim Shah and more frequently known by the designation Yavuz, the new sovereign initially aimed to eradicate the supporters of his rival in Anatolia—including the Avşar, Çepni, Ustaclu, Dulkadir, Rumlu, Şamlu, and Tekelü Turkmen tribes—to mitigate the Safavid threat. His second initiative involved the implementation of an embargo on high-value commodities, particularly silk, originating from Iran. In the interim, the political threat emanating from Shiite propaganda and allegations of Kızılbaş association provoked significant sectarian strife among Muslim Turks in Anatolia. This circumstance inherently prioritized the Safavids as the primary antagonist. Counter-propaganda and defensive initiatives revitalized Ottoman scholarly and intellectual communities, who proclaimed that the contest against the Safavids—characterized as Rāfizī (those who forsake the correct path, separatists), mulhid (heretics, non-believers), and subject to takfir (excommunication)—constituted a religious obligation more meritorious and pressing than jihad against non-believers. Furthermore, to bolster and safeguard Sunni orthodoxy in opposition to Shiism, a multitude of treatises and refutations were written, thus enhancing the extant literature and official dialogue.



Image 2: The Battle of Chaldiran (https://www.cnnturk.com/yasam/caldiran-savasi-so- nuclari-1591098)

The exchange of communication between the two Turkish leaders, as anticipated, intensified tensions to their highest level. Following the finalization of preparations within this heightened atmosphere, Yavuz left Edirne and by July 1514 arrived at the Safavid frontier. The challenging campaign path and the extended inability to confront the adversary incited a revolt among the Janissaries. Nevertheless, Yavuz's steadfast position—evidenced by his directive for the execution of Karaman Beylerbeyi Hemdem Pasha, whose pervasive misconduct had incited considerable social unrest—effectively averted the disintegration of the military. On August 23, 1514, the Ottoman army, possessing an advantage in firearms and effectively employing sophisticated warfare strategies and techniques, achieved victory in the Battle of Çaldıran. Subsequent to this triumph, the Ottomans seized Tabriz and dispatched scholars, artists, and craftsmen to Istanbul. Following a winter in Amasya, the army progressed in the spring to capture Kemah and Sivas, prior to moving in the direction of Diyarbakır. Through the contributions of the historian İdris-i Bitlisi, significant emphasis was placed on obtaining the backing of the Sunni-Shafi'i Kurdish tribes in the area. After securing control in the region, Yavuz made his return to Istanbul. During the Çaldıran campaign,

he diligently endeavored to ascertain the identities of those responsible for instigating the Janissary rebellion; however, despite the execution of several state officials, he did not succeed in attaining a definitive resolution. Therefore, while issuing a caution to the Janissary corps and their adversaries, Yavuz finalized arrangements for the campaign against the other significant eastern threat, the Mamluk Sultanate (al-Dawlah al-Turkiyyah), in March 1516.

Originally, the strategy entailed the army first subduing the Safavids, followed by a shift in focus towards the Mamluks. Nevertheless, when the Mamluk Sultan Kansu Gavri determined that he was the final objective in both scenarios and subsequently mobilized his army towards the region of Syria, the established hierarchy of priorities underwent a transformation. In reaction to the challenge presented by the Kingdom of Portugal—which had ascended to prominence in the Mediterranean during the 16th century and secured control in the Red Sea subsequent to its control of the Indian Ocean—propaganda was propagated alleging the Mamluks' inadequacy in safeguarding the Haremayn, the birthplace of Islam, and guaranteeing the safety of pilgrimage routes. Subsequently, in an effort to justify the assault on this Sunni individual in accordance with Islamic law (shar'a), a carefully constructed fatwa was produced, asserting that Kansu Gavri was a Rafizi (heretic) based on his purported collaboration with Shah Ismail, the well-known leader of the Rafizis. Therefore, the formal prerequisites for the campaign were satisfied. After an difficult campaign, on August 24, 1516, the Ottoman forces secured a significant victory at the Battle of Marj Dabiq, attributable once again to their control in firearms. During this era, the Abbasid Caliph al-Mutawakkil 'ala Allah and three judicial officers from diverse Sunni denominations operating under Mamluk protection were captured by the Ottomans. Following his encounter with the Abbasid Caliph in Aleppo, Yavuz advanced to Damascus, another vital regional hub, to reinforce his authority over the territory.

Concerning the Mamluk front, upon the arrival of reports indicating that the forces assembled around Tumanbay were poised to initiate an offensive, Cairo emerged as the subsequent target. In the course of consultations, certain state officials cautioned that traversing the desert would prove difficult, potentially even insurmountable, involving significant risks, and that the troops, lacking the capacity to withstand such adversities, might revolt. Nevertheless, Yavuz illustrated his resolve not to yield in his advance toward Cairo by ordering the execution of the opposition's representative, Grand Vizier Hüseyin (Hüsam) Pasha. Following an



difficult traversal of the desert, the Ottoman army bypassed the Mamluk defensive strategies by eschewing a direct attack on the Cairo walls—which were enhanced with trenches and artillery extending from Mukattam Mountain to the Nile—by maneuvering around the mountainside, effectively neutralizing the defense system. Ultimately, in an intense confrontation at Ridaniya, the Ottoman forces achieved victory (January 22, 1517) and subsequently entered Cairo two days afterward. On February 15, Yavuz formally entered the city and, after the Friday sermon (khutbah) was delivered in his name, officially declared and affirmed his sovereignty. As the newly appointed ruler of Hejaz and Egypt, Selim I officially took on the role of guardian of the Holy Cities after engaging with Abu Numayy, the son of the Sharif of Mecca, in July, subsequent to the capture and execution of Tumanbay on March 30. Subsequently, the Abbasid Caliph al-Mutawakkil ʻala Allah along with his retinue, including Muhammad—son of Kansu Gavri—well-known local figures, religious artifacts, scholars, and craftsmen, were dispatched by sea to Istanbul. Yavuz personally led his army back to Istanbul via land, thereby concluding the Egypt campaign that extended over twenty-five months (July 25, 1518).

Having eliminated two significant threats in the East, Selim I redirected his attention to the Western front upon his return to the capital. He actively participated in diplomatic initiatives aimed at averting the establishment of a new Crusader alliance and implemented military strategies in response. In order to address any potential threat emanating from the Western regions, he emphasized the reformation and enhancement of naval capabilities. Just as Rhodes was established as an objective, the insurrection led by Sheikh Jalal, a partisan of the Safavids, in the spring of 1519 necessitated a renewed focus on the Eastern region. Concurrently, a plague epidemic commenced, and Selim's condition deteriorated as a result of a substantial tumor (Eastern boil) on his back. He departed on September 22, 1520. The historical records referred to as *Selimnâme* offer comprehensive narratives of the tumultuous and difficult nature of his reign.

A contentious aspect of Selim I's reign involves the claim that following the Mamluks' defeat, the custodianship of the Two Holy Cities (Haramayn) and the caliphate were embodied by the Ottomans, and that this was officially recognized through a formal ceremony. Indeed, subsequent to the reign of Murad I (r. 1362–1389), the Ottomans employed the honourific title of caliph to signify "a just sovereign who governs in compliance with Sharia law." Following the acquisition of control over the Hejaz and Egypt beginning with the reign of Selim I, the Ottomans

assumed the title Hâdimü'l-Haremeyn'ş-Şerifeyn (Servant of the Two Holy Sanctuaries), which denotes their function as protectors of Mecca and Medina. Beginning in the late eighteenth century, amid political competition with other Muslim-majority empires, including Britain and Russia, the caliphate was increasingly highlighted as a strategic political and diplomatic instrument to offset the decline in tangible power and to reinforce assertions during negotiations. As previously mentioned, there exists no contemporary evidence within the sources indicating that Selim I formally accepted the caliphate from the final Abbasid caliph, Al-Mutawakkil III, who had been dispatched to Istanbul. The earliest records of such a transfer originate from the nineteenth century and are regarded as retroactive interpretations driven by political motivations. Furthermore, it is essential to recognize that the caliphate, either as an institution or a concept, cannot be symbolically transferred via a formal ceremony. The legitimacy and representation of the caliphate depend on the effective safeguarding of the Islamic world and the acknowledgment of leadership by the Muslim community (Ummah). In this regard, the authorization provided by Selim I's successor, Suleiman the Magnificent, for Al-Mutawakkil III to return to Egypt demonstrates the Ottoman assurance in their own depiction of the caliphate and suggests that the final Abbasid caliph was not perceived as a political threat.

During the initial quarter of the sixteenth century, the Ottomans, having attained unequivocal control over rival Muslim states and asserting their leadership of the Islamic world, accentuated the title of caliph in Friday sermons (khutbah), within the bureaucracy, and in diplomatic communication, foregoing the necessity of legal codification or formal rites, instead depending on their genuine authority and position.

Owing to the unequivocal control his father Selim I had established in the East, his son Suleiman I (the Magnificent) assumed the throne in 1520 and promptly directed his focus towards the Western front. His undisputed and unchallenged ascent to the throne represented a considerable advantage. Belgrade and Rhodes, which had been objectives since the time of Mehmed the Conqueror yet remained unconquered, were prioritized on his list of conquests. Belgrade, the primary point of resistance obstructing Ottoman expansion into Central and Southeastern Europe, was captured in 1521, succeeded by the fall of Rhodes in 1522, a crucial strategic location for Mediterranean control. The capture of Belgrade witnessed the opening of pathways to Hungary and Central Europe. Following their victoryat the Battle of Mohács (1526), the Ottoman forces progressed to the vicinity of Buda. Therefore,

the 150-year impediment to Central Europe was surmounted, and the Ottomans emerged as direct competitors to the Habsburgs. Owing to the substantial distance between this novel arena of conflict and the Ottoman capital, significant logistical difficulties emerged in the provision and administration of critical needs, including troop movements, provisioning, and accommodation—namely, traditional campaign organization encountered disruptions. Furthermore, the climatic conditions, particularly during winter (Ruz-ı Kasım), alongside the constraints in transportation and communication inherent to the era, significantly influenced both decision-making and its implementation in the field. In this context, in addition to the considerable distance from the center, the requirement of returning with a large army during severe winter conditions significantly complicated and intensified the campaign.



Image 3: Süleyman the Magnificent (https://www.worldhistory.org/image/12586/suleiman-the-magnificent//)



During the rule of Süleyman the Magnificent, while the Ottoman forces progressed as far as Vienna, they were necessitated to withdraw owing to the advent of autumn. Although maximizing its military capacities, the army acknowledged that sustaining a presence in the area was not viable. Nonetheless, amidst the ongoing conflict, the Habsburgs officially acknowledged Ottoman sovereignty over Hungary through the treaty of 1533, which permitted the Ottomans to redirect their attention to developing concerns on the Eastern front. During the Irakeyn Campaign (1534) conducted against the Safavids, the cities of Baghdad and Tabriz were successfully captured. Subsequent to the Nahçıvan Campaign, the Treaty of Amasya (1555) solidified Ottoman control in the area. Prior to reengaging on the Western front, the Ottoman Empire started the Moldavian campaign in 1538 as a measure to reinforce its borders, extending northwards beyond the Black Sea and reaching locations such as Bender and Özü. In the same year, an Indian campaign was started to reaffirm Ottoman influence in opposition to the Portuguese Crown, while essential steps were implemented to safeguard the Two Holy Sanctuaries (Haremeyn) and regulate and enhance trade in the Red Sea. This sovereignty ultimately extended to encompass Yemen and Habesh (Abyssinian Eyalet, 1555).

With respect to maritime supremacy, which constituted an additional pillar of achieving great power status, the induction of Barbarossa Hayreddin Pasha—who ascended from piracy to the position of Governor of Algiers—into Ottoman service in 1533, along with the formation of an alliance between France, a competitor of the Habsburgs, and the Ottomans, progressively transformed the geopolitical and strategic dynamics in the Aegean and Mediterranean regions. This naval control was unequivocally illustrated by the Ottoman victory at the Battle of Preveza in 1538, where they defeated the Spanish Habsburgs along with their allies, the fleets of Venice and the Papacy. This hegemony persisted in North Africa and the Mediterranean—excluding the island of Malta—until the Battle of Lepanto in 1571.

Having established control over the maritime regions of the Old World, the Ottoman Empire subsequently redirected its attention to terrestrial pursuits, with a particular emphasis on Central Europe. In 1541, to reinforce their influence in Hungary, Buda and Central Hungary were integrated into a central administration designated as “Buda Beylerbeylik.” Subsequently, Hungary emerged as a site of contention between the Ottoman and Habsburg empires, resulting in its division into three regions, with Central and Eastern Hungary being governed by the



Ottomans. To sustain control over Transylvania, which persisted as a vassal principality, the southwestern area was annexed to the center as the Timișoara Beylerbeylik in 1552. These developments, which reinforced Ottoman hegemony in the region, started a period of relative tranquility until the final military endeavor of Suleiman the Magnificent, namely the Siege of Szigetvár.

The Szigetvár Campaign, conducted from August 6 to September 8, 1566, signified a crucial transition in the conflict against the Habsburgs, culminating in an Ottoman victory despite the opposition orchestrated by Count Miklós Zrínyi. Nevertheless, the ensuing objective of progressing toward Vienna was relinquished after the demise of Suleiman the Magnificent during the campaign. In the interim, two significant undertakings—challenging to execute yet strategically forward-thinking and innovative—are worthy of acknowledgement. The initial initiative involved the anticipated construction of the Suez Canal, intended to reinforce Ottoman control over the Arabian Peninsula, North Africa, and the Indian Ocean. The second initiative was the Don-Volga Canal Project, conceptualized as a transformative strategy in the competition with Russia in Central Asia and the Caucasus, aimed at ensuring control over pilgrimage routes and historical trade corridors. Notwithstanding the proposal of these projects in the concluding years of Suleiman's rule, their realization was hindered by the constraints in technical expertise and resource availability prevalent during that period. Moreover, the inability to secure the geopolitically and strategically significant locations of Kazan and Astrakhan led to the Ottoman Empire's acquiescence to Russian influence and presence in the region.

Referred to in Western sources as "The Grand Turk," akin to his grandfather Mehmed II (the Conqueror) and as "Suleiman the Magnificent," Suleiman I (Kanuni) is recognized as the longest-reigning Ottoman sultan, with a tenure spanning 46 years. Commanding his army in thirteen campaigns, he undeniably elevated the Ottoman Empire to the status of a global power; consistent with the archetype of a world conqueror, he met his end on the battlefield. As an advocate of the "Gaza policy" and holding the title "Caliph of the Muslims," he served as the unequivocal leader of the Islamic world, acting as the protector and defender of Sunni orthodoxy against Rafidites, heretics, and apostates. Concurrently, he exhibited compassion towards his subjects, acting as a benefactor, maintained a close affiliation with Sufi circles, and served as a munificent patron of culture, arts, and literature. Moreover, during his rule, the Ottoman Empire exerted

considerable influence on the balance of power in the West and the development of contemporary Europe, attributable to its alliances, granted privileges, support for Protestantism, and the vast territories it governed. His triumphs contributed to the construction of the perception of the "Invincible Turk" in Christian Europe. The development of Ottoman governance and ideology, the reinforcement of Sunni-Hanafi jurisprudence, the formation of traditional bureaucratic frameworks, and—notably—his comprehensive codification endeavors are characteristic elements that significantly delineate his epoch. This distinguished legacy was subsequently idealized as the Ottoman "Golden Age" and functioned as a crucial reference in bureaucratic circles and reformist literature during times of crisis. The nostalgia associated with the Golden Age and the accompanying mythos surrounding Suleiman culminated in the emergence of a legendary figure within political, advisory, and reformist literatures. Nevertheless, a prudent perspective regarding this Golden Age narrative is necessary, especially when examining the deficiencies highlighted in sources contemporaneous with or immediately succeeding his rule, such as the Süleymannâmes. In essence, traditional historiography—primarily oriented towards military campaigns and triumphs—necessitates a critical reevaluation through a deconstructive framework that examines institutional, social, and economic dimensions.

Turmoil and Reform Efforts in the Ottoman Empire (1566-1703)

The alterations in power dynamics and social structures during the Early Modern Period, encompassing the emergence of new political centers, geographical explorations and discoveries, the establishment of new trade routes, the Military Revolution, the prevalence of firearms, the transformation of battlefield tactics into siege warfare, the redistribution of wealth, the ascent of bureaucratic classes, and population expansion, resulted in a sequence of disruptions and crises worldwide, including within the Ottoman Empire. In addition to the aforementioned factors, the deficiencies of the era's sovereigns and governing elites, the succession of underage sultans to the throne, the resulting political engagement of palace officials, the emergence of the rule of aghas and women, and the latent unrest in the provinces concurrent with the erosion of central authority, all significantly contributed to the dysfunction of the Ottoman classical order, as embodied by the concepts of nizam-ı alem (order of the world), kanun-ı kadim (ancient law), and



dâire-i adliyye (judicial circuit). This complex network of interconnected issues progressively evolved into a chronic state.

Following Suleiman I (the Magnificent), his son Selim II (r. 1566–1574) succeeded to the Ottoman throne, marking the first instance of a sultan born in the capital ascending to power. Upon the death of his father during the Szigetvár Campaign on the night of September 6–7, 1566, the information was withheld for approximately forty days to mitigate potential disorder within the army, while Prince Selim was duly notified. During his accession, Selim encountered a financial crisis involving the Kapıkulu troops, which was ameliorated through the prompt and resolute action of Grand Vizier Sokollu Mehmed Pasha, who therefore solidified his authority. Selim II is distinguished as the first Ottoman sultan who did not personally command a military campaign throughout his eight-year reign. This passive ruler profile, which surfaced subsequent to conqueror sultans like Mehmed the Conqueror, Yavuz Sultan Selim, and Suleiman the Magnificent—whose reigns were predominantly characterized by military endeavors—resulted in a swift deterioration of political and military strength. Modern sources highlight that Selim infrequently participated in the Sultan's Friday audience (Selamlık) and exhibited a detachment from the public. Selim II dedicated considerable time to enjoying pleasures in Edirne and Istanbul, entrusting state matters to Grand Vizier Sokollu Mehmed Pasha. It is unsurprising that his spouse, the Haseki Sultan Nurbanu (formerly Cecilia), wielded substantial influence over this quiescent individual. Rebellions emerged in Basra and Yemen; diplomatic engagements persisted; peace with the Safavids was preserved, and the conflict with the Habsburgs concluded in 1568. Selim's rule illustrates a monarch who opted to maintain a low profile, eschewing aspirations of global control in favor of fostering peace and order in foreign relations while prioritizing internal security within his domain. According to Sokollu's conception, the military campaigns to Astrakhan (1569) and Cyprus (1571)—the latter recognized as a vital strategic objective for supremacy in the Eastern Mediterranean and deemed a princely aspiration by Selim—were overseen from the central authority rather than directly by the sultan. The capture of Cyprus was commemorated through extensive celebrations; however, this success was transient, as on October 7, the Ottoman fleet experienced a significant defeat in the Battle of Lepanto (referred to as the Battle of Naupactus) in the Gulf of Corinth, Greece. This naval engagement, which resulted in the near-total loss of the Ottoman fleet, came to be referred to as the "Sinking Fleet War" and dismantled the longstanding European perception of Turkish

invincibility that had been prevalent since the 15th century. The reacquisition of Tunis from the Spanish in 1574 was subsequently acclaimed as an opportunity to mitigate this distressing memory. Sultan Selim II died on December 15, 1574.

Murad III, who reigned from 1574 to 1595 as the successor to Selim II, progressively assumed administrative authority while eschewing the control of his inner circle, heeding their counsel to affirm his own leadership. Therefore, he gradually reduced the influence of Grand Vizier Sokollu Mehmed Pasha. Similar to his father, Murad III refrained from leading military campaigns in person; instead, he endeavored to strengthen his authority by announcing hostilities against the Safavid dynasty. Subsequent to a successful campaign, Ottoman forces penetrated Georgian territory. During his reign, one of the most influential political figures since the time of Suleiman the Magnificent, Sokollu Mehmed Pasha, was assassinated in 1579. The assassination was ascribed to the Hamzavi faction and should be understood within the framework of factional political antagonisms. The recurrent appointments and removals within the upper bureaucracy during the reign of Murad III significantly intensified political instability. The extended confrontations with the Safavids (1578–1590) and the Habsburgs—referred to as the Fifteen Years' War (1591–1606)—predominantly characterized the reign of Murad III. Simultaneously, the Empire aimed to preserve its authority and impact in the Caucasus, the Mediterranean, and North Africa. On the western front, the matter of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth emerged as a significant preoccupation. Furthermore, beginning in 1579, initiatives to foster diplomatic and trade relations with England became a significant strategic maneuver to aid conflicts against Portugal and Spain.

A notable item on the agenda of the capital was the circumcision ceremony conducted in 1582 for Şehzade Mehmed, which extended over nearly two months and elicited significant public interest. This opulent and excessive occasion placed considerable strain on the financial resources of the state, especially affecting the current conflicts on the Safavid front. To offset the economic strain, soldiers were remunerated with debased currency referred to as züyûf akçe (coins characterized by diminished silver content and decreased value), an action that incited a revolt among the Janissaries (Kapıkulu) who advanced to the palace gates in 1589. Alongside the economic disruption caused by the war economy, the introduction of silver reals from the New World—brought into the Ottoman market by the Spaniards—precipitated a financial crisis and price volatility that similarly



impacted the Empire. Concurrently with the erosion of the formidable and dominant sultan archetype during the reign of Murad III, the ascendance of the "Sultanate of Women" became evident, exemplified by influential figures such as the Valide Sultan Nurbanu, the Haseki Sultan Safiye, and subsequently the chief of the harem, Canfeda Kadın. The expansion of their political and administrative functions was unsurprising. As documented in contemporary reform treatises, the splendor of ceremonies, the pivotal influence of palace officials in political affairs, the preferential treatment extended to individuals such as Sheikh Şüca, the dwarf Cühud Kemal, Jewish financial agents (Kira Kadınlar), astrologers, and interpreters of dreams, along with prevalent luxury, extravagance, bribery, nepotism, the enlistment of unqualified persons into the military and bureaucracy (particularly within the Janissary corps and the timar system), and the degradation of the timar system itself, all significantly intensified the administrative and social vulnerabilities of the Empire.

The new occupant of the throne, Mehmed III (reigned 1595–1603), assumed power in an atmosphere of grief and public discontent arising from the execution of nineteen princes—strangled as a component of the fratricide tradition aimed at maintaining the nizam-ı alem (order of the world). As one of his initial actions, he re-engaged with the public by participating in Friday Selamlık ceremonies, thereby ending the isolation from the populace that characterized his predecessor's tenure. Despite his hesitation regarding the sustained influence of the Sultanate of Women and the intrusion of palace elites into state matters—a trend that had intensified during his father's rule—he found it challenging to oppose the forceful demeanor of his mother, Safiye Sultan. Furthermore, he did not establish a well-known stance within the competition among the viziers of his era. Subsequent to the setback on the Wallachian front and the surrender of the Esztergom fortress in 1595, coupled with inquiries from the military and the public regarding the absence of the Sultan himself in leading campaigns, Mehmed III resolved to initiate a military expedition targeting Buda (Vienna) on June 20, 1596. For the first time in three decades, since the era of Suleiman the Magnificent, extensive ceremonies were conducted to the fortress of Eger in October and the victory at the Battle of Mezőkeresztes (Haçova) elicited considerable jubilation. Nevertheless, subsequent adversities—comprising the fall of Yanıkkale (1598), a severe plague epidemic, and setbacks during the Varad campaign on the Hungarian front—once more diminished morale.

Concurrently, the insurrections that commenced in Anatolia rapidly developed into a significant domestic crisis referred to as the Celali Rebellions. The insurrection orchestrated by Karayazıcı Abdülhalim, who promulgated firmans emblazoned with the seal "Abdülhalim Shah," unequivocally illustrated the magnitude of the challenge. Compounding the challenges, reports of military setbacks from the front, an intensifying economic crisis, the involvement of Safiye Valide Sultan in governmental matters, and the ascent of the Jewish Kira Woman Esparanzo Malchi to a position of prominence within the palace incited an additional rebellion in the capital on April 1, 1600. The capture of Kanije Fortress in the autumn (October 22) and the subsequent defeat and execution of Karayazıcı, a significant leader among the Celali rebels (1601), contributed to a partial restoration of morale. Nevertheless, the persistent competition between the Janissaries and Sipahis, the power dynamics among state officials, and the sultan's neutrality in these conflicts culminated in an embarrassing incident when representatives of the Kapikulu Sipahis demanded accountability from the sultan during the Ayak Divanı (Foot Council) held at the palace. Political stability continued to prove elusive. In this fraught environment, Mehmed III, apprehensive that rival factions might supplant him with his eldest son, Şehzade Mahmud, commanded the prince's execution in June 1603. In the concluding years of his rule, the regions of Tabriz and Nakhchivan were relinquished, and the sultan succumbed to illness, ultimately passing away on December 20, 1603.

I. Ahmed (reigned 1603–1617) succeeded to the throne at the age of fourteen after the passing of his father. During that period, conflicts with Iran and Austria were in progress; on the eastern front, Ottoman forces struggled to maintain their position against the Iranian army. This setback was partially offset by the acquisition of Vişegrad, Tepedelen, Uyvar, and Estergon on the western front. The Ottomans, seeking to quell both the Celali rebellions and Iranian conflicts, concluded the Treaty of Zsitvatorok (November 11, 1606) following the Habsburgs' articulation of their desire for peace. This treaty concluded approximately fifteen years of conflict between the two nations and acknowledged the sultan and the Roman Caesar as diplomatic counterparts. Remaining in force for over fifty years, this treaty eliminated the complete Ottoman supremacy on the western front and concluded the symbolic disputes that had been manifest in political dialogue and diplomatic rhetoric.



Throughout the rule of Sultan Ahmed, significant conflicts persisted in Anatolia involving the Celali rebels, in the eastern region against Iran, and in the western area against the Habsburgs. The protracted and unresolved conflicts placed a significant financial strain, leading to elevated taxation on the public, economic instability, the deterioration of the timariot cavalry, and the endorsement of the Celalis by certain governors, including Tavil Ahmed, Canbolatoğlu Ali, and Kalenderoğlu, among others. As a result, the administrative, social, and economic framework of the nation experienced significant disruption. The insurrection of undisciplined levends (irregular troops), discontented sipahis, and jobless medrese students (suhtes) resulted in a total disintegration of order in Anatolia. As a consequence of the ensuing power vacuum, vulnerabilities in security, and the repression of the population by local administrators (ehl-i örf), widespread migrations referred to as Celâ-yı Vatan or the Great Flight transpired. These migrations resulted in a significant decline in agriculture, livestock breeding, and, as a consequence, tax revenues, precipitating a profound crisis in the region. Fortunately, Grand Vizier Kuyucu Murad Pasha's determined repression of the Celalis provided a transient respite. Likewise, the 1612 treaty victorythe restoration of peace on the Iranian front, allowing the Ottomans to shift their attention towards the Western front and the Mediterranean region. Successful results were attained against the Kingdom of Spain, the Grand Duchy of Tuscany, and the Knights of Malta. One of the most notable occurrences during the reign of Sultan Ahmed, who passed away at the age of twenty-eight on November 22, 1617, was the modification of the laws governing succession and sovereignty. The system referred to as Ekberiyet ve Erşediyet Usulü (the seniorate system) was implemented, wherein the eldest member of the dynasty would succeed to the throne (primogeniture), while the remaining princes were spared execution but confined under supervision in a designated area of the palace termed the "kafes" (cage or enclosure) located in the Şimşirlik section. This reform was significantly shaped by the grief and public response engendered by the execution of nineteen of his brothers upon the accession of Sultan Ahmed's predecessor, III Mehmed. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that in the ensuing periods, the stipulations of this system were not consistently executed in their entirety.

Following the premature demise of Sultan Ahmed, the throne devolved to his brother, I. Mustafa, whose reign was characterized by disruptions attributable to his mental health and psychological challenges, specifically exhibiting traits of mild insanity and madness. His reign is therefore bifurcated into two distinct

periods (1617-18 / 1622-23). The selection of Mustafa, the uncle, in lieu of the young prince Osman, elicited considerable resistance. Nevertheless, as Mustafa's psychological state deteriorated, Şehzade Osman was obliged to assume the throne after a mere ninety-six days (February 26, 1618). The adolescent sultan, merely fourteen years of age, initially marginalized the faction responsible for his uncle's ascension to the throne and subsequently directed his attention toward confronting the Safavids. Concurrently, he established rigorous protocols to maintain discipline and order within central and provincial military units. In an attempt to rejuvenate the diminished prestige of the Ottoman akçe (currency), he implemented various administrative measures and enhanced the inspection mechanism (tebdil) through regular audits. To exhibit his strength to both the military and the citizenry, as well as to redirect focus externally, Osman resolved to initiate a campaign against the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in 1621. Although the sole concrete result was the handover of the Hotin Fortress to the Ottoman vassal principality of Moldavia, the campaign was commemorated with elaborate ceremonies and portrayed as a significant triumph. Numerous actions taken by Osman escalated the resistance directed toward him. These encompassed reductions in military stipends (bahşiş), the confiscation of "arpalık" lands—an additional income source traditionally allocated to the ulema, the strict implementation of military conscription along with his personal oversight of salary distribution, and unannounced inspections of locations often visited by the Kapıkulu soldiers, such as coffeehouses, taverns, and boza shops in disguise. Defaulters were severely punished. These policies collectively shaped his reign and provoked resistance.

Osman's II proclamations intended to overhaul the foundational components and institutions of the state—namely, the existing order and traditions—significantly expanded the opposition coalition against him. He unequivocally expressed his commitment to marrying four free women in lieu of concubines, as demonstrated by his unions with a noblewoman from the lineage of Pertev Pasha and Âkile Hanım, the daughter of Şeyhülislam Esad Efendi. Five months following his return from the Hotin campaign and the suppression of the Druze Emir Maanoğlu Fahreddin's rebellion in Lebanon, Osman declared his plan to embark on the pilgrimage to Mecca. This determination constituted the ultimate impetus; notwithstanding the endeavors of the religious authorities (Meşihat) to dissuade him, he persisted resolutely. Critics embellished and disseminated propaganda asserting that this determination was underpinned by II. Osman's purportedly intentions to



enlist troops from Anatolia, Egypt, and Bilad al-Sham to eradicate the Janissaries and transfer the capital to a different city, such as Bursa or Cairo.

Prior to Osman's II expedition to Syria and Egypt, the Friday Salutation ceremony was marked by significant tension; subsequently, the opposition coalition, comprising ulema, military figures, and statesmen under the leadership of Kara Davud Pasha, started a rebellion (May 19, 1622). Upon the insurgents' entry into the palace, II. Osman, at midnight, sought refuge at the residence of the Janissary Agha Ali Agha, appealing to the Janissary corps for their support. Nevertheless, the Janissaries assassinated Ali Agha, subsequently invaded his residence, and apprehended the sultan on the second day of the insurrection. What ensued is unparalleled in Ottoman history: contemporary accounts indicate that the young sultan endured public humiliation, appearing bareheaded and clad in ragged attire while mounted on a donkey, and was subsequently executed by strangulation in Yedikule. Certain sources indicate that, as evidence of his demise, his severed nose and ears were presented to the mother of his predecessor, Sultan Mustafa, along with the leaders of the opposition.

II. Osman exhibited considerable dedication to the policies of conquest and holy war, drawing inspiration from historical figures such as Fatih, Yavuz, and Kanuni. Nevertheless, characterizations of him as an extraordinary radical reformer or innovator, grounded in his ideals and aspirations, are deficient in robust evidence and represent inflated attributions intended to bolster political objectives or idealized narratives crafted by subsequent historians. Subsequent to the tragic occurrence referenced in scholarly works as Facia ve Hâile-i Osmâniyye (Osman's Tragedy), the dethroned Sultan I. Mustafa reassumed the throne on May 20, 1622, for his second reign. The controversy resulting from the assassination of II. Osman and the progressively declining mental condition of I. Mustafa compelled him to adopt a passive role as an observer of the power dynamics between Kara Davud Pasha and Mere Hüseyin Pasha. During this time, the ascendancy of women became well-known once more, and numerous domestic uprisings occurred. The designation of the Valide Sultan as the "spiritual sultan" in contemporary sources is notably significant. Concurrently, in Erzurum, Abaza Mehmed Pasha commenced a rebellion invoking the unjust assassination of II. Osman under the motto "the murdered shah is the killing sultan," thereby instigating a reckoning among individuals implicated in the Hâile-i Osmaniyye and fostering a renewed atmosphere of disorder. This period of upheaval concluded

with the deposition of I. Mustafa, whose legitimacy as a sovereign was contested by all factions (September 10, 1623).

His successor, IV. Murad (r. 1623–1640), was classified among the "child sultans" who inherited the throne at a tender age; he was merely ten years old upon his accession. Therefore, the instruments of authority were maintained for an extended period by his mother, Mahpeyker (Kösem) Sultan, along with state officials endorsed by the valide sultan, notably Grand Vizier Topal Recep Pasha. It was not until almost a decade following his ascension to the throne that he developed maturity and began to assert genuine authority. During this time, the regency of his mother, the power dynamics among state officials, and the factionalism within the Kapıkulları (Palace Guards), which led to an authority vacuum, presented significant challenges. IV. Murad undertook substantial efforts to quell the ongoing rebellions of the Janissaries and Sipahis, as well as the insurrections started by regional power centers in the provinces. The destruction wrought by the significant fire of Cibali in 1633, which obliterated one-fifth of the capital, posed a considerable challenge in terms of recovery. In the realm of external relations, his reign was characterized by persistent conflicts with the Safavids, the restoration of state sovereignty in the Syrian and Baghdad areas, and the suppression of tribal groups. Attempts were undertaken to reestablish stability amidst the unrest in Georgia, to quell the insurgency led by Zaydi Imam Muhammad b. Qasim, who assumed control of the Mecca region and its adjacent areas (1631–33), and to mitigate the rebellion started by the Druze Emir Maanoğlu Fahreddin in Mount Lebanon (1635). Other significant military campaigns encompassed the acquisitions of Revan (1635) and Baghdad (1638), the mitigation of incursions and looting by the Zaporozhian Cossacks, the administration of relations with Poland (Lehistan), the assertion of Ottoman control in response to the increasing influence of the Crimean Khanate and Russia in the area, the quelling of uprisings in Albania and Bosnia, and the engagement with the Republic of Venice in the Mediterranean to safeguard trade interests. The ratification of the Treaty of Kasr-ı Şirin (1639), which concluded hostilities with Iran, along with the initiation of preliminary diplomatic relations with Sweden, constituted significant developments of his time. During this time, the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648) engulfed Western Europe, facilitating Ottoman incursions into the Balkans and Central Europe. Nevertheless, internal challenges and power conflicts hindered the Ottoman Empire from fully leveraging these opportunities. Regarding the sectarian Christian



disputes and political antagonisms that echoed within the Ottoman capital via ambassadors and diplomatic missions, a neutral policy was implemented.

IV. Murad was recognized for his unwavering position regarding authority and his austere disposition. From 1632 onward, after assuming control of governmental authority, he exhibited no tolerance for civilian or military entities that infringed upon state authority in both central and provincial regions, ultimately executing a significant number of local administrators and state officials. The executions of the judge of İznik and the Şeyhülislam Ahizade Hüseyin Efendi were documented as extraordinary and contentious events, accompanying the deaths of his close associates Abaza Pasha and the poet Nef'î. As his sphere of resistance diminished and he perceived a threat, he promptly resorted to ordering the assassinations of his brothers or sons. During his rule, establishments such as taverns and coffeehouses were closed and dismantled due to the assertion that they had evolved into hubs of sedition and political dissent. The imposition of stringent prohibitions on coffee, alcohol, tobacco, and opium was diligently enforced, resulting in the execution of numerous individuals for transgressing these regulations. These limitations were primarily concerned with maintaining the unequivocal authority embodied by the sultan. In a period when substantial gatherings presented a considerable risk, policies designed to reduce interpersonal contact were implemented. IV. Murad's endorsement of the Kadızadelis—a radical religious faction adhering closely to the literal text of the Quran and Hadith while eschewing interpretative reasoning—was motivated not by personal piety or Salafi convictions, but rather by the fact that the Kadızadelis' religious interpretations offered a highly effective and justifiable basis for restricting gatherings, thereby impeding the emergence of opposition and therefore bolstering his authority. Nevertheless, circumstances did not allow him a prolonged reign; IV. Murad died on February 8, 1640, due to progressive illnesses.

Following the reign of IV. Murad, who implemented stringent measures to partially reinstate the centralist state and the diminished authority of the sultan, the Ottoman throne was inherited by his sole surviving sibling, Sultan İbrahim (reigned 1640–1648). The assertion made in certain studies that he was "mad" contradicts evidence from contemporary sources and imperial edicts (hatt-ı hümayun). Nevertheless, an analysis of these sources reveals that he experienced medical conditions characterized by convulsions and seizures, which significantly compromised his psychological well-being, along with a deficiency in the

perception, knowledge, and resilience required for effective governance as a sovereign. Therefore, it is unsurprising that during his reign, Şekerpare Hanım and Hüseyin Efendi—referred to as Cinci Hoca, renowned for his potent breath and efficacious prayers—emerged as significant figures. Similarly, İbrahim's fixation on amber and fur, the levy of taxes on sable and fur, and his sometimes unpredictable actions, such as requiring substantial holiday bonuses from regional administrators, are noteworthy, as they incited significant uprisings in Anatolia. Nevertheless, in an ironic turn of events and as a reminder of historical dynamics, İpşir Mustafa Pasha was assassinated by the local power he was intended to regulate; notwithstanding Varvar Ali Pasha's opposition to labeling him a rebel, İpşir Mustafa Pasha did not exhibit a similar determination in response to the central authority's ultimatum of "your head or your life." Notwithstanding these occurrences, Sultan İbrahim ascended to the throne and reigned for eight years under the guidance of his mother, Mahpeyker (Kösem) Valide Sultan, and well-known statesmen, including Grand Vizier Kemankeş Kara Mustafa Pasha. In contrast to the reign of his predecessor IV. Murad, contemporary sources indicate a more tranquil and relaxed environment during İbrahim's rule.

In terms of external affairs, with the exception of several actions such as the extended siege of Crete—commenced in 1645 and crucial for Mediterranean supremacy—the conflict with Venice in the Dardanelles Strait and along the Dalmatian coast, as well as the participation of the Crimean Khanate and the Ukrainian Cossacks, there were no other significant developments. It is also important to acknowledge that the Ottoman Empire did not leverage the opportunities afforded by the concurrent Thirty Years' War (1618–1648) in Europe. Owing to the sultan's relatively nominal status and his proclivity for pleasure or marginalization, his reign transformed into an arena for the power machinations of the Valide Sultan and well-known statesmen. This intense competition, which resulted in the deaths of numerous officials, occasionally included the Kapıkulları (Palace Guards), who functioned either as instruments or intervened according to their own volition. In an attempt to mitigate this decline, a coalition of religious scholars and Janissaries engaged in the violent assassination of Grand Vizier Ahmed Pasha (Hezarpare, the Groom), who was deemed principally accountable for the Sultan's manipulation, indulgence in luxury, extravagance, acceptance of bribes, and bias in appointments (1648). Following this, Sultan İbrahim was initially deposed and subsequently strangled, with the consent of Kösem Sultan.



Following Sultan İbrahim, another child sultan, IV Mehmed (reigned 1648–1687), succeeded to the Ottoman throne at the age of seven. The newly appointed sultan, subsequently referred to as "the Hunter" owing to his enthusiasm for hunting, was governed under the regency of Hatice Turhan Sultan, who emerged as a significant and exemplary representative of the women's sultanate tradition after Nurbanu, Safiye, and Kösem Sultans. Roughly the initial decade of his reign was characterized by the complete oversight of his grandmother Kösem and his mother Hatice Turhan, along with the statesmen they endorsed. Intense competition between state officials and the leaders of the military corps (ocak ağaları) resulted in uprisings in the capital and the demise of several senior officials. Simultaneously, uprisings occurred in provinces including Sivas, Antep, and Afyon. The treasury's profound financial challenges, the dissemination of devalued coinage, and the failure to disburse military salaries precipitated a multitude of disturbances and uprisings. The Ottomans experienced setbacks in their conflict with the Venetians in the Mediterranean, and the obstruction of the Dardanelles Strait led to considerable commercial and financial deficits, along with severe disturbances to the supply system of the capital. As a result of pervasive corruption, bribery, and in particular, the increasing cost of living, the general population and merchants frequently mobilized and besieged the entrances of the Palace.

Gradually, the competition between Kösem Sultan, who maintained her authority as the Grand Valide Sultan, and Hatice Turhan Sultan, recognized as the Lesser Valide Sultan, escalated. Therefore, Kösem Sultan formulated strategies to depose IV Mehmed and install Şehzade Süleyman, the son of the amiable and obedient Saliha Dilaşub Sultan, on the throne. In 1651, as a consequence of this intense political conflict, Kösem Mahpeyker Sultan, the Valide-i Muazzama, along with her allies, were murdered by palace eunuchs, thereby rendering this initiative incomplete. Subsequent to this occurrence, the responsibilities of governance were transferred to Hatice Turhan Sultan and her coalition. In this contemporary epoch, characterized by escalating factional disputes referred to as the "Factional Wars," political vendettas, recurrent dismissals and appointments, as well as executions, occurred in rapid sequence. In light of the escalating financial crisis, the selection of Tarhuncu Ahmed Pasha as Grand Vizier in 1652 was a judicious choice, as considerable improvements in treasury revenues were rapidly attained. Nevertheless, the implementation of new taxes aimed at addressing budget deficits, reductions in extravagant expenditures within the palace and senior bureaucracy, and notably his attribution of primary responsibility for the escalating financial

crisis to the palace, ultimately signified the onset of his decline. Tarhuncu Ahmed Pasha was assassinated in 1653 under a multitude of pretexts, including allegations that he aimed to modify the sultanate itself. The escalating financial crisis and the disbursement of devalued coinage to soldiers rapidly precipitated a new rebellion referred to as the Çınar Incident (Vak'a-yı Vakvakiye) in 1656. In response to the rebels' demands, approximately thirty senior state officials and palace eunuchs were executed, and their corpses were suspended from the boughs of the prominent plane tree (Çınar) in Sultanahmet.

In an environment characterized by revolts, economic crises, and recurrent dismissals and appointments, progressive positive developments began to surface with the elevation of Köprülü Mehmed Pasha to the position of Grand Vizier in 1656. From that juncture forward, the governance of the state was predominantly assumed by Hatice Turhan Valide Sultan and Köprülü Mehmed Pasha, while Sultan IV Mehmed moved to Edirne and primarily engaged in hunting activities. Following the recommendation of Köprülü, his son Fazıl Ahmed Pasha was designated Grand Vizier in 1661, during whose leadership the recovery efforts persisted. During the two-decade tenure of the father and son as grand viziers (1656–1676), favorable results were obtained against the Venetians and the French, as well as against Poland and Austria in Central Europe. The capture of Uyvar in 1664 culminated in the Treaty of Vasvár, which established a twenty-year period of peace with Austria. Subsequently, the capture of Candia (1669) culminated in the resolution of the protracted issue of Crete, which had persisted for a duration of twenty-five years. During this time, ongoing conflicts with Venice prevailed in the Mediterranean and the straits, along with the plundering and raiding actions of the Ukrainian Cossacks in the Black Sea area. Setbacks in Hungary and the complete defeat experienced during the Second Siege of Vienna threatened the Ottoman presence in Central Europe. In the end, to reverse this deterioration, Sultan Mehmed IV—referred to as Avcı Mehmed (the Hunter)—was dethroned on November 7, 1687, at the behest of the military, religious scholars (ulema), and government officials. During his 39-year reign, he emerged as the longest-reigning sultan following Suleiman the Magnificent.

During the rule of Sultan Süleyman II (r. 1687–1691), in an effort to address the persistent financial crisis and to fulfill the payment of soldiers' salaries, gold and silver artifacts from diverse treasury departments, including the Enderun Treasury and the Istabl-ı Amire, were dispatched to the Mint for conversion into



currency. When these efforts proved inadequate, supplementary taxes known as imdadiye were imposed on affluent classes; however, despite these initiatives, stability remained elusive in the capital during the initial years of his rule. Rumors even emerged suggesting that the Crimean Giray dynasty would succeed the Osmanoğlu dynasty on the throne. In Anatolia, formidable groups referred to as saruca and sekban, assembled around specific leaders, were causing widespread disruption and instilling fear throughout the region. As these internal challenges endured, the Ottoman Empire concurrently experienced territorial losses to the Habsburgs and Venetians across Northern Hungary, the Northern Carpathians, the Mediterranean, and the Adriatic. The imposition of additional taxes and the emergence of security issues in Anatolia further disrupted agricultural and commercial activities, resulting in a significant reduction in revenues for the central treasury. As a result, the introduction of copper coins referred to as mangır exacerbated the economic crisis, as merchants declined to accept this currency, leading to a near standstill in commerce. In order to generate new revenue streams, meyhanes (taverns) were permitted to resume operations subject to substantial licensing fees, the formerly eliminated role of hamr eminliği (wine controller) was reinstated, and customs duties were levied on tobacco. Following Köprülüzade Mustafa Pasha's elevation to the position of Grand Vizier on November 8, 1689, a notable improvement was perceived owing to his judicious decisions and initiatives. With the assistance of Selim Giray, certain tactical victories were secured against the Habsburgs, and morale experienced a moderate improvement following the 1690 recapture of Belgrade. Nonetheless, with the demise of the chronically ill Sultan II Süleyman, his brother II Ahmed ascended to the throne (r. 1691–1695). Throughout his reign, conflict with Austria persisted on the Hungarian front; however, neither side achieved a definitive advantage. After the demise of II Ahmed on February 6, 1695, his nephew II Mustafa succeeded to the throne.

II Mustafa (r. 1695–1703), although the conventional successor to the throne after the demise of his father IV Mehmed (Avcı) and II Süleyman, did not garner favor from the state elite and the palace guards (kapıkulları). Therefore, following the demise of II Ahmed, he announced his sultanate on February 6, 1695, bypassing the Grand Vizier and the Sheikh-ul-Islam to prevent his potential marginalization once more. In order to assert his authority and power over his adversaries, he directly commanded the inaugural campaign against Austria, which commenced on June 30. The defeat of the Austrian forces led by General Veterani near the Temes River significantly enhanced morale, and the sultan received

the honorary title of gazi (warrior). Nonetheless, during this period, the Russians successfully seized the fortress of Azak on the Black Sea on August 6, 1696, notwithstanding Ottoman attempts to obstruct its capture. To maintain the prolonged and multifaceted conflicts throughout his reign, affluent viziers and beys were necessitated to mobilize troops at their personal cost. Furthermore, for the first time, approximately 1,500 Bostancı guards stationed in Istanbul and Edirne were instructed to participate in military campaigns. II Mustafa commenced his second campaign in April 1696, successfully capturing Timișoara (Banat) following significant combat. At sea, the Ottomans sustained their dominance over the Venetians along the Dalmatian coast. Concurrently, victory by French mediation, an offer of peace was transmitted from Austria; however, the sultan, bolstered by his recent successes, declined the proposal and started a third campaign in September 1697. It is noteworthy that II Mustafa was the final Ottoman sultan to personally command his army during a campaign. Before the commencement of the third campaign, deliberations ensued regarding the routes through Varadin and Timișoara, with the eventual selection of the latter, notwithstanding its greater distance. During this difficult journey, numerous bridges were built. Upon arriving in Zenta, military units commenced the crossing of a bridge that spanned the Tisa River; however, the Grand Vizier along with a segment of the army remained in the rear, thereby disrupting the army's operational order. Upon acquiring this knowledge, Prince Eugene engaged the segment of Ottoman forces that had not yet traversed, successfully eliminating roughly one-eighth of the Ottoman army. Grand Vizier Elmas Mehmed Pasha, along with over twenty commanders, perished, while the Austrians secured considerable spoils. This significant defeat at Zenta profoundly impacted Ottoman morale. The conditions on the fronts facing Poland, Venice, and Russia were predominantly disadvantageous to the Ottoman Empire. In these circumstances, the Ottomans were obliged to agree to the peace initiative triumph by England and the Dutch Republic. The negotiations conducted in Karlowitz, located near Belgrade, extended over a period of approximately four months. The ensuing treaty, that came into force on January 26, 1699, concluded the Great War, which had persisted intermittently for a duration of sixteen years. As per the terms outlined, the Ottoman Empire relinquished control of all of Hungary, including. Transylvania, with the exception of the Banat Province of Timișoara. The Peloponnese (Morea) Peninsula was transferred to the Venetians, whereas Ukraine and Podolia were granted to Poland. Moreover, the



1700 Treaty of Istanbul between Russia and the Ottoman Empire culminated in the surrender of the fortress of Azak.

The Treaty of Karlowitz, which concluded the multi-dimensional conflicts of the Ottoman Empire with the allied forces of Austria, Poland, and Venice, augmented by Russia in 1695, after the failed Second Siege of Vienna in 1683, is regarded as a significant turning point in Ottoman history. Nevertheless, as indicated in some studies, it does not signify "the commencement of the conclusion." In the period immediately following this date, the Ottomans secured significant victories, including the Pruth Campaign in 1711 and the capture of Belgrade in 1739. Nevertheless, it is essential to stress that the protracted, complicated conflicts culminating in the Treaty of Karlowitz significantly caused upheaval to the social and economic framework of the Ottoman Empire. The failure to pay soldiers' salaries resulted in the implementation of new taxes across all stratas of society—including novel measures such as the "coffee tax" (bid'at-ı kahve)—along with extensive confiscations. To mitigate the inadequacies in both the calibre and size of the army, the recruitment of ordinary citizens (nefir-i âm) became imperative. Concurrently, organizations such as the saruca and sekban in Anatolia, as well as the hayduk in the Balkans, surfaced as unregulated groups, exacerbating the cycle of violence and safety issues. These developments resulted in administrative, financial, and social crises reaching catastrophic proportions. Moreover, rebellions in Şehrizor, Aleppo, Damascus, and Basra, the revolt of Crimean Khan Gazi Giray against Devlet Giray, and revolts in Georgia further exasberated inadequacies in military strength. Due to specific policies implemented during the grand vizierates of Amcazade Hüseyin Pasha and Rami Mehmed Pasha, certain fundamental issues were partially tackled during the post-Karlofça peace era.

As the political and economic crises intensified in the Ottoman capital, II. Mustafa retreated to Edirne and, mirroring his father, dedicated himself solely to hunting. He delegated the responsibilities of governance to Seyyid Feyzullah Efendi, his former mentor during his years as a prince, who had since been designated as Sheikh al-Islam, and his colleagues. This circumstance was viewed negatively by the public, the bureaucracy, and palace notables, causing speculation that his destiny would resemble that of his predecessor, IV. Mehmed (Avcı). The incontestable influence and dominance of Sheikh al-Islam Feyzullah Efendi and his associates in governance progressively expanded the sphere of the opposition. As a result of an insurgency in Georgia, approximately 200 cebeci soldiers, who

had experienced delays in the payment of their stipends (ulufe), started a revolt, thereby establishing the foundation for the further escalation of this unrest into a subsequent rebellion. Concurrently, representatives of the opposition, having reached a consensus on the matter of succession, departed from Istanbul en route to Edirne to engage with the sultan. Nonetheless, their apprehension heightened the existing tensions. Capitalizing on Feyzullah Efendi's obstruction of the opposition's representatives in presenting a petition (mahzar) to the sultan, Grand Vizier Rami Mehmed Pasha apprised the sultan of the situation, culminating in Feyzullah Efendi's dismissal. Concurrently, a substantial assembly of approximately 60,000 individuals traversed the route from Istanbul to Edirne with the objective of advocating for a succession to the throne. In response to the proposal endorsed by the Janissaries, state officials, and the ulema to bring his brother III. Ahmed to the throne, and in an effort to avert an internal crisis, II. Mustafa opted to abdicate on August 22, 1703. Therefore, due to the revolt, Feyzullah Efendi—who was extensively implicated as the primary factor behind the nation's declining condition—along with his family and political allies, was subjected to diverse forms of torture and degradation during the events referred to as the Edirne Incident (1703), ultimately leading to their demise and the restoration of a relative stability.

Towards a Modern State: Reluctance and Modernization (1703-1876)

During the Edirne Incident, III. Ahmed (reigned 1703–1730) was unanimously enthroned. He initially purged the factions that had emerged prominently during the turmoil and attempted to assert control over the state. Shortly thereafter, he dismissed those appointed to high offices during the rebellion, thereby consolidating his power. To address chronic issues, he avoided warfare whenever possible. However, the refuge granted by the Ottoman Empire to Charles XII of Sweden (known as "Demirbaş Charles")—who was defeated by Russian Tsar Peter the Great—made conflict unavoidable. Due to Tsar Peter's failure to comply with the terms of the Istanbul Treaty (1700) and provocations by Crimean Khan Devlet Giray, the Ottomans declared war, marking the beginning of the Ottoman-Russian conflict known as the Prut Campaign (April 9, 1711). After uniting with Crimean forces, the Ottoman army achieved a decisive victory over the Russians near the Prut River at the Falcı position. However, the failure of the Russians to honor the provisions of the Treaty of Prut, signed on July 23, 1711, led to the dismissal of Grand Vizier Baltacı Mehmed Pasha and Sultan III. Ahmed's withdrawal to Edirne



in preparation for a new campaign. Nevertheless, under the mediation and pressure of British and Dutch envoys, the Russians pledged to comply with the treaty's terms, resulting in the cancellation of the planned campaign.

In November 1715, Sultan Ahmed III returned to Istanbul and was welcomed with grand ceremonies. Encouraged by this enthusiasm and driven by the desire to avenge the Treaty of Karlowitz, the following year he launched the Corfu campaign. Contrary to expectations, however, it ended in defeat. When Austrian forces advanced toward the region of Niš, the war between Austria, Venice, and the Ottoman Empire was concluded with the Treaty of Passarowitz (July 21, 1718). Through this treaty, the Ottomans not only withdrew from Central Europe but also ceased to be a serious threat to the Western world. The consolation for the Ottomans was the beginning of a twenty-year period of peace and stability in the West and North. The twelve years of this era that coincided with the reign of Ahmed III came to be seen as a period of opportunity and restoration—one in which the empire sought to address its chronic problems and adapt to developments in the wider world.

The period popularly referred to as the Tulip Era (1718–1730) was named by Yahya Kemal, and popularized by Ahmed Refik (Altınay), who serialized articles under this title in the newspaper İkdam in 1913 and published them as a book in 1915. Such a designation is not found in contemporary sources. Claims that tulip bulbs were sold for astronomical prices—such as 500 or 1000 gold coins—are fabrications; data in the price regulation registers (narh defterleri) of the period invalidate these assertions. It should be noted that Ottoman elites did not encounter the tulip—a flower native to the countryside—for the first time in this era; nor did they write their first poems about it, host their first helva gatherings, construct their first waterfront mansions or pavilions, or experience moonlight excursions, boat outings, or other pleasures and entertainments for the first time. The oft-repeated claim that the iconic pavilions and mansions built in Sa'dābād (Kağıthane) were constructed according to plans imported from France has been invalidated by recent scholarship. The embassy reports (sefâretnâme) and observations of Yirmisekiz Çelebi Mehmed Efendi—who was dispatched not only for diplomatic duties but also to observe and report on France's institutions of civilization and education with a view to adapting suitable practices—do not support the ideological narratives of civilizational shift or radical Westernization promoted by popular historiography. On the contrary, they present a traditional perspective,

marked by unwarranted self-confidence and a fatalistic, superficial, and dismissive view of Western developments.

Let us shed light on the aspects that have been overshadowed by the pleasure-centric and Westernization-obsessed narrative constructed around the so-called Tulip Era. Thanks to the alignment of vision and goals between Sultan Ahmed III and his Grand Vizier, Nevşehirli Damad İbrahim Pasha, the period of peace secured by the Treaty of Passarowitz (1718) was utilized to address long-neglected infrastructural issues of the imperial capital—problems that had been largely ignored during the reign of his predecessor, Mustafa II. The Great Cibali Fire of 1718 and the devastating earthquake that struck Istanbul the following year turned these urban reforms from a matter of choice into necessity. Roads in the capital were leveled, the city walls were repaired, and new dams and fountains were constructed to resolve chronic water shortages. The construction of ornate pavilions, the arrangement of new roads and gardens, and the erection of magnificent public fountains were part of this broader urban renewal. The initiatives of this period extended far beyond landscaping and infrastructure. To effectively combat the frequent fires that ravaged the city, the Tulumbacı Corps (fire brigade) was established in 1722 under the leadership of Gerçek Davud Agha, a converted French engineer. Lighthouses were built at key coastal points to improve maritime safety. Measures such as quarantines and early inoculation practices were introduced to combat epidemics, especially smallpox. Reflecting the Sultan's patronage of science, culture, and the arts, libraries were established across the capital, and the export of manuscript books abroad was prohibited. Poets, artists, and scholars were supported and encouraged. Moreover, a major translation campaign was launched to bring knowledge from the Western world—particularly in military sciences and the natural sciences—into the Ottoman intellectual sphere.

Since the late 15th century, printing presses established by non-Muslim communities had existed within the Ottoman realm. During this period, however, a Turkish-script printing press was founded with the encouragement and patronage of the state by Said Efendi—who had accompanied his father, Yirmisekiz Çelebi Mehmed Efendi, to Paris—and the Hungarian convert İbrahim Müteferrika. In 1727, the press began publishing books in Turkish, provided they were of non-religious content. Additionally, tile, brick, and high-quality textile (Hatayi) workshops were established in Istanbul. In line with efforts toward military modernization, steps were taken under the supervision of foreign experts, particularly Rochefort.



It should be noted that the Ottomans did not, for the first time, employ non-Muslims in advisory roles during this era. Such appointments were considered professional services at a time when nationalism had yet to emerge and nation-states did not exist. Many of these individuals came to Istanbul either because the Empire's generous payments made it an attractive employer, or because they sought to pursue opportunities in a new setting after failing to find what they were looking for in their home countries.

Toward the end of Sultan Ahmed III's reign, the most pressing issues on the political agenda were developments in Iran and Afghanistan. Russia's ambitions to reach the Persian Gulf, combined with the unstable political climate in Iran and the appeals for protection from the Muslims of Shirvan and Dagestan in the face of Russian pressure, prompted the Ottoman Empire to intervene in Western Iran. This campaign, aimed at securing the Empire's eastern frontier, culminated in a battle near Nihavand in 1726, where Ottoman forces suffered a defeat at the hands of the Iranian-Afghan coalition. The war concluded with the Treaty of Hamadan (1727) and marked a turning point in Ahmed III's reign. The military failure was seized upon by the opposition and transformed into a broad political campaign. Their primary grievances included rising taxation, high cost of living, mass migration to the capital from Anatolia due to security concerns, resulting unemployment, and persistent criticism of courtly extravagance, pleasure-seeking, and perceived wastefulness. One frequently cited complaint was that Grand Vizier Nevşehirli Damad İbrahim Pasha had favored his inner circle in government appointments. The final blow came with new reports of defeats on the Iranian front. To contain the growing unrest, Ahmed III declared a military campaign and crossed to Üsküdar with his army, leaving the capital vulnerable. In his absence, opposition forces, led by prominent figures such as Hagia Sophia preacher İspirizade Ahmed Efendi, Istanbul's chief judge Zülali Hasan Efendi, and a retired janissary named Patrona Halil, incited a full-scale revolt on September 25, 1730. When word of the rebellion reached the Sultan, he hurried back to Topkapı Palace. Unable to pacify the increasingly powerful rebels, bolstered by the participation of the janissaries, the Sultan was forced to make concessions. He handed over Grand Vizier İbrahim Pasha—widely held responsible for the unrest—along with his sons-in-law, Kaymak Mustafa Pasha and Kethüda Mehmed Pasha, who were executed and delivered to the insurgents. This did not suffice. The rebels went further and forced Sultan Ahmed III to abdicate on October 1, 1730.

Following the Patrona Rebellion, the new sultan Mahmud I (r. 1730–1754), who ascended the throne after the revolution and the deposition (hal‘) of Ahmed III, bided his time to purge the prominent figures and factions that had gained influence during the revolt and sought to assert tutelage over the throne. Like his uncle Ahmed III, Mahmud I was compelled to accept, albeit reluctantly, the rebels’ destruction of Saadabad, one of the most iconic symbols of the previous era, as well as the arbitrary and brazen demands and actions of Patrona Halil, the ringleader of the rebellion. Once the necessary preparations had been made, and under the pretext of a planned military campaign against Iran discussed in a palace council meeting, Mahmud I orchestrated the assassination of Patrona Halil and other key rebel leaders on November 25, 1730. By eliminating these power-brokers, the sultan freed himself from their tutelage. After restoring order in the capital within a short time, Mahmud I was able to return to the regular affairs of state.

Between 1731 and 1736, a series of wars were waged against Iran in the East, ultimately preserving Ottoman interests in the region. These military campaigns earned Mahmud I the honorary title of “Gazi” (warrior for the faith). Another problematic region was Ukraine and Podolia, where the construction of new fortresses by Russia along the frontier and the assault on the Fortress of Azov in 1736 triggered a renewed conflict. The war front expanded further in 1737, when Austria entered the war alongside Russia. Following intense and multi-front military engagements, the Ottomans achieved a critical victory with the recapture of Belgrade, a city of strategic significance for the Ottoman presence in the Balkans and Central Europe. The war with Austria concluded with the Treaty of Belgrade, signed on 28 September 1739. With the diplomatic support of France and Prussia, and Sweden’s strengthening of ties with the Ottoman Empire through a commercial treaty, Austria withdrew from the conflict. Consequently, Russia, left without a major ally, was compelled to sign a peace treaty with the Sublime Porte on 12 December 1739. Further solidifying Ottoman diplomacy, defense and trade agreements were signed with Sweden (4 January 1740) and Spain, respectively. Thus, the Russian threat was neutralized, and a balance of power was achieved through mutually beneficial relations with the European states.

These new conditions paved the way for a period of relative peace in the Western front, lasting for approximately thirty years. Benefiting from this tranquil environment, extensive reconstruction and development projects were started, earning Sultan Mahmud I the epithet “muammir-i bilâd” (developer of cities). As



part of the military modernization efforts, the sultan requested a strategic roadmap from İbrahim Müteferrika, which led to the composition of the treatise titled "Usûlü'l-Hikem fî Nizâmi'l-Ümem". Following Müteferrika's recommendations, Comte de Bonneval, a French émigré whose request for asylum had been previously denied during the reign of Ahmed III, was now appointed as a military advisor under the name Humbaracı Ahmed Pasha (d. 1747). As a result, the Humbaracı Corps was reorganized, and a School of Engineering (Hendesehâne) was established in Üsküdar Toptaşı in 1734 to provide modern military education. This institution would later serve as the foundation for the Imperial Schools of Military Engineering for the army and navy, which were established during the reigns of Abdülhamid I and Selim III. Given the growing importance of firearms in warfare, increased attention was directed toward the Humbaracı and Artillery Corps, and new legal regulations were introduced for the timariot (tımarlı sipahi) cavalry. After the death of İbrahim Müteferrika in 1747, efforts were made to revive the printing press, including the recruitment of technicians from Poland and the opening of a paper mill in Yalova. Additionally, reforms were implemented in fire safety, currency circulation, and the fiscal calendar.

Following the death of Sultan Mahmud I, Osman III (r. 1754–1757), who had spent the longest period of confinement in the Şimşirlik Pavilion in Ottoman history, ascended the throne at the age of fifty-eight. His short reign was marked by frequent dismissals and appointments within the bureaucracy, particularly in the office of the Grand Vizier. His impulsive nature and eccentric demeanor—evident in his public appearances during disguise tours (tebdil gezileri), where he mingled with crowds to observe diplomatic processions and was known to eat fruits and other items bought from street vendors—were often cited as indicative of his unusual temperament ("garib meşreb"). Since neither Osman III nor his predecessor, Mahmud I, had any offspring, concerns about the continuity of the dynasty grew significantly. Domestically, his reign witnessed the suppression of certain provincial notables (ayan) in Anatolia, efforts to prevent migration to the capital from the provinces, and four major fires that devastated Istanbul. The Golden Horn froze during an especially harsh winter in 1755, and a series of earthquakes and floods caused widespread panic. On the other hand, due to the outbreak of the Seven Years' War (1756–1763) in Europe—where major European powers became entangled in extensive conflict—his reign remained relatively uneventful in terms of foreign policy, as the Ottoman Dynasty stayed neutral during this major European confrontation.



THE OTTOMAN STATE

During the reign of Mustafa III (r. 1757–1774), various measures were taken to alleviate public burdens—such as tax reforms, ensuring the security of the Hajj route, combating corruption in the administration of waqfs (religious endowments), and reducing palace expenditures. However, these efforts were often disparaged by the ruling elite, who perceived them as signs of the sultan's stinginess. The period of peace in the northern and western fronts, which had lasted for nearly twenty years since the Treaty of Belgrade (1739), proved beneficial in terms of social and economic recovery. Nonetheless, on the reverse side of the coin, in an era where warfare tactics and technologies evolved rapidly through direct battlefield experience, this extended period of peace worked to the detriment of the Ottomans. The peace lasted until the outbreak of the Russo-Ottoman War in 1768, meaning the empire had remained at peace for nearly thirty years by that time. This prolonged military inertia, combined with the army's prolonged absence from campaigns beyond the capital, emboldened local powers and unruly provincial authorities—referred to as mütegallibe—in regions such as Anatolia, Rumelia, and Egypt, who began to defy imperial authority. Another critical issue was the succession crisis and fears of dynastic extinction. After nearly forty years without a male heir in the dynasty, the birth of Şehzade Selim in 1761 brought significant relief and was celebrated with elaborate ceremonies, marking a hopeful turn for the future of the dynasty.

This joy was short-lived. The devastating Istanbul earthquake of 1766 caused significant loss of life and immense financial damage, necessitating the near-complete reconstruction of the capital. During Mustafa III's reign, the Ottoman-Russian War (1768–1774)—which he personally supported—ended in an utter defeat for the empire, marked by losses in Crimea, Wallachia-Moldavia, and along the Danube front, as well as the destruction of the Ottoman fleet at the Battle of Çeşme. Closely tied to this war was a renewed push for military modernization, during which the Hungarian-born French Officer Baron François de Tott was employed as a military advisor. In response to the Çeşme disaster of 1770, a series of critical reforms were started, including the rebuilding of the navy, fortification of the Bosphorus castles, and the reorganization of the Tophane and the artillery corps (Topçu Ocağı). Additionally, institutions such as the School of Artillery (Topçu Mektebi, 1772), the Hendesehane (School of Geometry) established along the Golden Horn, and the Corps of Rapid-Fire Artillery (Sürat Topçuları Ocağı) were founded, marking important steps in Ottoman military reform.



For the Ottomans, the war of 1768–1774, which ended in one of the greatest disasters in their history, claimed the life of Sultan Mustafa III before it had even ended. The Sultan was known for his keen interest in astrology (ʿilm al-nujūm). Believing that senior officials should be chosen according to their auspicious stars, the Sultan selected his viziers accordingly. In 1763, he requested Frederick II of Prussia, via Ahmed Resmî Efendi, whom he had dispatched to Berlin, to send some of his court astrologers, whom he believed to be behind the Prussian king's notable successes. Frederick's response, attributing his successes to historical knowledge, a well-trained and disciplined army, and a full treasury, may or may not have led the Sultan to adopt a more rational outlook—a question that remains beyond historical certainty.

I. Abdülhamid, the brother and successor of III. Mustafa (reigned 1774–1789), ascended the throne at the mature age of fifty. Determined to end the Ottoman-Russian war that began in 1768 and had turned disastrous over the past five years, the new sultan sought to sign a peace treaty that would minimize losses after a few tactical victories. However, the defeats suffered by the Ottoman army at Kozluca and Şumnu prevented this. Reluctantly compelled to negotiate, the Ottoman Empire signed the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca on July 21, 1774, ceding strategic territories in the northern borders, including Azov and Crimea. The loss of Crimea, whose population was entirely Muslim, constituted a profound trauma. Furthermore, Russia gained the status of protector of Orthodox Christians within the Ottoman subjects, as well as the right to benefit from commercial privileges previously granted to France and England.

During his reign, the leader of the Beni Zeydan tribe, Zahir al-Umar, who rebelled in northern Palestine, the Mamluks who revolted in Egypt, and the bandit groups known as levends in Anatolia were suppressed. Although public order was generally restored, the Wahhabi movement rapidly emerged as a significant problem undermining the authority and prestige of the caliph-sultan, particularly in the Arabian Peninsula's Diriyah region, where the ideas of Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab developed under the patronage and support of the Emir of Najd, Abdulaziz ibn Saud. Taking advantage of this situation, Iran's occupation of Baghdad and Basra and its encouragement of tribal revolts in Anatolia escalated the border disputes between the two countries to a critical level.

During the reign of I. Abdülhamid, as part of military modernization, the Humbaracı and Topçu Corps were reformed, the Kalyoncular were stationed in

barracks, and the navy was renewed. In 1775, the Imperial Naval Engineering School (Mühendishâne-i Bahrî-i Hümâyun) was established to train naval officers to meet modern needs. New laws were enacted to regulate the Tımarlı Sipahis, Lağımcı, and Janissary corps. With contributions from foreign engineers and military advisors such as Baron de Tott, the convert Kembıl Mustafa, and Ober, the Engineering School and the Sürat Topçuları (Rapid Artillery) Corps were modernized. Additionally, through the efforts of de La Fayette and François Alexi, the establishment of the Naval Engineering School, the School of Fortifications, and the renovation of the cannon foundry strengthened the military reform process. However, these positive developments were interrupted during the Ottoman-Russian War that began in 1787, as France sided with Russia and recalled its experts, limiting their impact. The revival of the long-dormant Müteferrika Printing Press in 1784 and the resumption of book printing were notable events of this period.

The Crimean matter constituted the principal vulnerability of I. Abdülhamid's reign. The area, which had a predominantly Muslim population and experienced significant violence at the hands of the Russians, emerged as a focal point of intense competition between Ottoman endeavors to reassert control and Russian ambitions to annex the Crimean Peninsula. In conclusion, the influence of Russia was firmly established through the Aynalıkavak Treaty (Tenkihname) of 1779, yet the Ottoman Empire reacted by implementing new strategies to govern the southern Caucasus. When the Crimean Khan Shahin Giray, supported by Russia, implemented unpopular policies that incited a rebellion, Marshal Potemkin executed thousands of Muslims in Crimea and later, in 1783, occupied and annexed the region. This expedited the re-emergence of conflict between the two nations. The Ottomans declared war on August 19, 1787, as a result of the secret plans devised by Russia and Austria, otherwise known as the Greek and Dacian Plans[1], that was aimed at realising the partition of the Balkans and the Peloponnese. Austria's intervention resulted in the Ottoman forces engaging in combat on two fronts; however, they ultimately relinquished control of the fortresses of Iași in northeastern Romania and Hotin in western Ukraine. They exerted all their efforts to protect the strategically significant fortress of Özü (Ochakov). In December 1788, an offensive orchestrated by Rus-

[1] Tsarina Catherine II named her grandson Konstantin Pavlovich, brought Greek nursing mothers from Greece, agreed with the Austrian Emperor Joseph II on the restoration of Byzantium, and planned to establish the territory of present-day Romania as an independent state under the name of the Dacian State, with Marshal Potemkin at its head.



sian Marshal Aleksandr Vasilyevich Suvorov along with harsh winter conditions rendered the defense of the fortress and city challenging. Following the defeat of the Ottoman fleet dispatched for aid, Russian forces seized the fortress and city in 1789, perpetrating a massacre of roughly twenty thousand individuals, predominantly civilians. Upon the dissemination of this somber information to the capital and its subsequent communication to Sultan I. Abdülhamid, who had been enduring a prolonged illness and profound distress due to a succession of successive defeats, his health deteriorated significantly, culminating in his death shortly thereafter on April 7, 1789.

The rule of Selim III (r. 1789–1807) represents a pivotal moment in the historical trajectory of the Ottoman Empire. As I. Mahmud and III. Osman produced no successors, the arrival of Prince Selim—occurring forty years subsequently—was commemorated with considerable festivity. As the inheritor of the dynasty, the prince was nurtured in an environment of tolerance and care, characterized by freedom, and, in accordance with the wishes of his father, Mustafa III, he received education in state governance, institutions, and protocol from a young age. He acquired his reformist disposition from his father. Employing the pseudonym İlhamî, his poems centered on Crimean themes resonated with public sentiment, expressing a desire for retribution against adversaries throughout his reign. The understanding of global dominance (cihangirlik or "sahipkıranlık") associated with the active, diligent, and well-educated young prince sparked rumors that a political faction sought to replace the elderly Sultan I. Abdülhamid with his nephew. The dismissal and execution in 1785 of Grand Vizier Halil Hamid Pasha and his aide Vizier Raif İsmail Pasha suggest that these allegations were taken seriously. After this incident, Prince Selim, now cautious for attracting too much attention, corresponded with King Louis XVI of France in 1786. Drafts written by Ebubekir Ratib Efendi were personally edited by the prince and sent to France through Sultanzade Ishak Bey. Notably, Prince Selim signed his letters with the unprecedented titles of "heir to the sultanate" and "crown prince" in Ottoman history.

When Selim III ascended the throne on April 7, 1789, the Ottoman-Russian War, which had begun two years earlier, was still ongoing. The sultan, on whom great hopes were placed, accepted that the state he sought to govern was no longer the center of the world and, through a rational scaling down of objectives, transformed the concept of Nizâm-ı Âlem into Nizâm-ı Cedid. Significant global developments also influenced this paradigm shift. Just before his reign, the

Enlightenment, the Industrial Revolution, and the French Revolution—which occurred in the year he took power—had begun radically altering the Old World and traditional structures in the West. The Industrial Revolution in England, the revolutionary government in France (the French Nizâm-ı Cedid), Emperor Joseph II's extensive reforms in Austria (1780–1790), and the declaration of a modern constitution (May 3, 1791) establishing a new order in Poland (Lehistan) all demonstrate a general trend from tradition toward modernity.

In the existing literature, there are recurring criticisms that the Ottomans failed to comprehend the meaning and significance of the French Revolution. No monarchy in the Western world applauded the French Revolution; on the contrary, monarchies viewed this development as a grave threat and therefore cooperated during the Coalition Wars to suppress France. Through a series of congresses, beginning with the Congress of Vienna, they sought to restore the status quo and reinforce monarchies. As a politically and socially multi-ethnic and multi-religious structure, the Ottomans did not respond differently from other monarchies in the West. Therefore, when addressing the issue within this framework, the question of why the Ottomans neither celebrated nor welcomed a development whose outcomes no one in the world could fully predict and which was highly likely to destabilize monarchies becomes inherently meaningless and absurd. Additionally, the initial atmosphere of chaos caused by the Great Revolution, the Ottomans' inertia and weaknesses in traditional intelligence sources, and their perception of the revolt as an internal rebellion and public order incident also influenced the state's stance.

Selim III initially aimed to turn the war, which had ended in a disastrous defeat against Russia, into a victory and personally lead a campaign to reclaim Crimea. However, he retreated due to the lack of approval from state officials. Reports from the front, including the historic refusal of the army to fight on July 9, 1791, in the Maçin plains within the borders of Tulcea city in the Northern Dobruja region of present-day Romania—a first in Ottoman history—were formally communicated to the central government through a joint petition (mahzar) by Serdarıekrem Koca Yusuf Pasha. This development deeply disappointed the Sultan. Consequently, the Ottoman State, compelled by circumstances, sat at the negotiating table and, due to the uncertainty and anxiety caused by the French Revolution, signed peace treaties with Austria at Ziştovi (1791) and Russia at Yaş (1792) with fewer losses and damages than expected, thus entering a period of peace.



Taking advantage of the tranquility brought by the peace period, Selim III sought to transform the Maçin Boycott (1791) from a military protest into a comprehensive reform movement. Primarily aiming to diffuse responsibility to the grassroots as an effective shield against opposition and, of course, to produce solutions through collective wisdom, he also requested solution-oriented reports (reform projects) from statesmen and military officials, serving as a kind of confessional platform. Following consultations with a core reformist cadre composed of trusted men he had appointed (Atabegân-ı Saltanat, later known as Rusçuk Yârânı), a comprehensive reform process was started under the name Nizâm-ı Cedid (New Order) in 1792. Within the framework of twenty-two reform projects identified so far—two of which were authored by foreigners (Baron von Brentano and Mouradgea d'Ohsson)—a 72-article reform program was formulated. Ultimately, the goal was to reach a level capable of competing with modern and powerful states represented by the Great Powers (Düvel-i Muazzama). Since it was well known that extensive reforms and institutional transformations entailed serious financial burdens, a fund named İrâd-ı Cedid was also established.

In the initial phase of the Nizâm-ı Cedid, a trained, regular, and disciplined army (talimli-rabıtalı asker, asker-i cedid) was established, similar to those in the West. Since it was not possible to abolish the traditional military classes or corps, and targeting the new units as scapegoats was deemed inappropriate, this modern military unit was named Muallem Bostânıyân-ı Hassa (Trained Imperial Bostancı Musketeers). Due to prevailing circumstances, the reformist cadre was compelled to maintain a "derivative and dualistic" approach, preserving both the old and the new side by side. This compulsory acceptance, also referred to as sünâyet, was largely determined by the fact that the newly established military unit did not possess the strength to entirely replace the old one. Within this framework, new barracks were constructed primarily at Levend Çiftliği as well as in the capital (Beyoğlu, Üsküdar, Selimiye in Harem, Humbaracı and Lağımcı in Hasköy) and in Anatolia (Aydın, Akşehir, Niğde, Kayseri, Kastamonu, Ankara, Bolu, Kütahya, etc.). In 1795, the Mühendishâne-i Berrî-i Hümâyun (Imperial School of Engineering for Land Warfare or the Military Engineering School) was established in Hasköy, Istanbul, as a complementary institution to the existing Mühendishâne-i Bahrî (Naval Engineering School). The disintegration of the French monarchy triumph the acquisition of officers, advisors, technicians, and specialists required for this process, drawing on the vacant military-civilian personnel. Translation committees were formed for the rendering of contemporary

military literature, and a special printing house was established for their publication in 1797 (Mühendishane Printing House). Meanwhile, a navy composed of seventy-two vessels was assembled, and massive shipbuilding docks were constructed. Alongside new taxes, efforts were made to close the treasury deficit as much as possible by conducting tımar (land tenure) audits, combating corruption in tax farms (mukataas), curbing luxury and waste, and preventing unnecessary imports. Encouraging statesmen with means and merchants to purchase ships and engage in maritime trade constituted another important initiative. Non-Muslim Ottoman subjects who wished to participate in commerce were granted trading privileges under the status of European merchants through official charters (berats). Efforts were also made to closely monitor developments abroad and promote integration with the modern world through resident embassies opened in London (1792), Paris, Berlin, and Vienna (1797).

Sultan Selim III, who kept a distance from the Revolutionary Wars that began in Europe, engaged in struggles against powerful local notables (ayan) who disregarded central authority—such as Pazvandoğlu, Tirsiniklioğlu, Tepedelenli, İşkodralı, Canikli, Cezzar, Kavalalı, and others—but was unable to achieve complete success. Similarly, the Mountain Bandits and the Kırcalı clans, who caused serious public order problems in the Balkans, were not fully suppressed. In response to the threat posed by Russia and Austria, an alliance was formed with Prussia in 1790; however, Napoleon's invasion of Egypt in 1798 and the subsequent alliance with England and Russia to reclaim the region became the subject of hostile propaganda by opposition groups, who argued that an alliance with "infidels" was impermissible. The Serbian Uprising of 1804 and the ensuing war with Russia, intertwined with this revolt, as well as the control of the Haramain by the Wahhabis—who obstructed the performance of the pilgrimage (Hajj)—seriously undermined the caliph-sultan's prestige and authority within the Islamic world.

During the reign of Selim III, inspired by the Prussian model, a decision was made in March 1805 to introduce compulsory military service for males aged 20 to 25 as part of a general conscription system. However, due to intense opposition, this decision was abandoned. The following year, the sultan insisted on the implementation of the same policy and decided to extend the Nizām-ı Cedīd reforms to Rumelia, marking a turning point in his reign. Kadı Abdurrahman Pasha, the governor of Karaman who had achieved success in the military reforms in Anatolia, set out with the Nizām-ı Cedīd forces but faced fierce resistance from



the ayans and their allies—the Mountain Bandits and the Kırcalı clans—in Silivri, Tekirdağ, and Çorlu, resulting in armed clashes between the parties. Known as the Second Edirne Incident, this event prevented the implementation of the Nizām-ı Cedīd program in Rumelia. Unable to maintain a firm stance in the face of this crisis, Selim III limited himself to exiling Grand Vizier Hafız İsmail Pasha, who had cooperated with the opposition, and ordered the army to stand down. To prevent a mutiny, he also appointed the Janissary Agha İbrahim Hilmi Agha as Grand Vizier and Topal Atâullah Efendi as Sheikh al-Islam in 1806.

The concessions made to rebels in the provinces and opposition factions at the center marked the beginning of the end. Meanwhile, due to Napoleon's brilliant victories, the recognition of the imperial title by the Sublime Porte was regarded by Britain and Russia—Napoleon's allies during the occupation of Egypt (1798)—as a significant geopolitical shift. Consequently, the Ottoman Empire found itself on the brink of war with its former allies. During this period, the British fleet passed through the Dardanelles and anchored off the capital (February 1807), which further undermined the already weakened authority of Selim III in the eyes of large segments of the population. The blockade by the British fleet led to famine and inflation in the capital, enraging even those who were not part of the opposition. False rumors circulated that the fleet had been invited by state officials specifically to destroy the Janissary Corps, escalating tensions to a breaking point. Meanwhile, following guarantees given to the former allies, the British fleet withdrew at the end of February, and on April 12, 1807, the Ottoman army embarked on a campaign against Russia. When the army reached Edirne to halt the Russian advance—using the Serbian uprising as a pretext—the flag of rebellion was raised in the capital.

The rebellion against the Nizâm-ı Cedîd, led and orchestrated by Köse Musa Pasha and Sheikh-ul-Islam Topal Atâullah Efendi, was started on May 25 by the Bosphorus guards. This uprising, later known as the Kabakçı Rebellion, received support from the British and Russian embassies, and Sultan Selim III was deposed by the end of the fourth day (May 25–29, 1807). The main list of twelve individuals (Nizâm-ı Cedid officials, Atabegân-ı Saltanat) whom the opposition demanded from the Palace for punishment were executed. Subsequently, the Irâd-ı Cedid fund was abolished. The Sultan's sacrifice of his own reformist team in order to preserve his reign caused significant antipathy among the public. However, these concessions were inadequate to save his throne. The outcome was clear: the

opposition, united in changing the throne, pledged allegiance to the crown prince Mustafa IV (May 29, 1807).

The new sultan attempted to poison his uncle using the palace doctor Lorenzo but failed. The reformists, known as the "Rusçuk Yârânı," who survived the chaos in the capital and remained loyal to Selim III, sought refuge with Alemdar Mustafa Pasha, the notable ayan of Rusçuk. Later, they came to Istanbul to stage a counter-coup, but their attempt was unsuccessful. When the palace gates were broken open and the palace entered, the mutilated body of the deposed sultan was found, mortally wounded by stabs and sword blows. In the face of this scene, Mustafa IV, who had ascended the throne 14 months earlier, was deposed, and allegiance was pledged to Şehzade Mahmud, who survived the palace assault with minor injuries (July 28, 1808). It should be emphasized here that attributing the short and troubled reign of Mustafa IV—who came to power through a rebellion and coup led by a broad coalition—and the ensuing unrest and failure to implement effective policies, solely in comparison to his predecessor Selim III and the Nizâm-ı Cedid reforms, is neither accurate nor fair. Existing evidence and contemporary writings are inadequate to claim that Mustafa IV openly opposed the reform process or program. Therefore, a more reasonable approach is to analyze the matter not through the progressive–reactionary dichotomy of successor and predecessor sultans, but rather within the context of the absolute hostility of anti-reformist factions toward Selim III and their forced alliance around the crown prince Mustafa IV.

Şehzade Mahmud, the son of Abdülhamid I and Nakşidil Sultan, came to the throne at the age of twenty-three as the successor of his elder brother IV. Mustafa. Nakşidil, who is popularly referred to in local and foreign literature as Aimee de Buc de Rivery and is claimed to belong to the French aristocracy, is presented as a distant relative of Josephine, the wife of Napoleon. According to legend, while returning from France, where she had gone for education, to Martinique, a French colony in the Caribbean, she was captured by Algerian pirates, then sold to the Ottoman Palace, and became one of Abdülhamid I's consorts in the Harem. In reality, Nakşidil was of Georgian origin; she was one of the servants of Esma Sultan, Abdülhamid I's sister, and entered the Harem due to the sultan's favor. The spread of this legend was influenced by France's invention of fictitious kinship ties with the Ottoman dynasty to transform them into political

and economic advantages, and, naturally, by the enduring allure of such stories in popular gossip and media.

Mahmud II ascended the throne in an environment characterised by palace coups, revolts, and counter-coups, from which he barely survived. Alemdar Mustafa Pasha, who came to the capital as the Ruschuk Ayan to reinstate the deposed Sultan III. Selim but failed to do so, instead brought Şehzade Mahmud to the throne and occupied the position of Grand Vizier. Mahmud was saved from Alemdar Mustafa Pasha's tutelage thanks to a conscious decision to remain passive during the Janissaries' revolt. At the time of his accession, the Wahhabi rebellion was ongoing in the Hejaz region, and wars with England and Russia were still being fought. On the other hand, the presentation of the *Sened-i İttifak*, a document embodying the tensions between the center and the provinces and reflecting the new political dynamics, right at the start of his reign was an unprecedented event in Ottoman history, marking the victory of the central-avoidant forces known as the ayans or notables.



Imagine 4: Mahmud the II
Source: https://turkmaarifansiklopedisi.org.tr/mahmud-ii#yazar-1

The reign of Mahmud II, who quickly managed to rid himself of the Sened-i İttifak—a kind of center-province pact—can be divided into two phases: a cautious preparatory period until the abolition of the Janissary Corps in 1826 (the Vak'a-yı Hayriyye), and a comprehensive implementation period marked by intense reforms between 1826 and 1839. The first phase of his reign was consumed with suppressing separatist and independence rebellions, which had become uncontrollable due to external support and protection, such as the Ottoman-Russian War (1808–12) and the Greek Revolt (1821–29). Noteworthy were the burning of the Ottoman fleet at Navarino in 1827, the recognition of Greek independence in 1829, and the French invasion of Algeria in 1830, which all revealed a sense of helplessness and an acceptance of such faits accomplis. Domestically, intense efforts were made to suppress local power centers known as ayans, notables, and mütegallibes, including Tuzcuoğlu, Tepedelenli, Tekelioğulları, and Karaosmanzadeler. The rebellion of Muhammad Ali Pasha of Egypt and his two invasions of Anatolia in 1832 and 1839, which resulted in the defeat of the central armies, demonstrated how questionable the actual strength of the state, the center-province relationship, and the authority of the sultan and governors were in practice. This disappointment and fatigue born of helplessness are reflected in Mahmud II's words: "I am tired of the troubles of the sultanate." In the final years of his reign, serious health problems and new ailments caused a general decline, as seen in reports from Chief Physician Abdülhak Molla. According to official records, Mahmud II passed away on July 1, 1839.

Throughout the roughly thirty-one-year tenure of Mahmud II, a significant program of reform and transformation was executed. Measures were implemented to modify the classical/traditional framework of the empire (nizâm-ı kadîm/kanun-ı kadîm), including its institutions and mindset. This transformation signifies a distinct departure from tradition and a deliberate focus on the future. Limiting the examination of tradition and the future exclusively to the mehter band and attire such as the fez and trousers—that is, to trivial and mundane aspects—either originates from a lack of knowledge or constitutes an intentional misrepresentation. During the reign of Mahmud II, extensive reforms were implemented across various domains, including the state apparatus, bureaucratic and military frameworks, diplomatic and legal interpretations, public relations and political symbolism, education, economic and social spheres, the initial population census, industrialization, transportation, postal services, municipal governance, and numerous additional fields. To diminish such a comprehensive modernization endeavor to



only the mehter and apparel represents a superficial and inadequate perspective. Furthermore, characterizing him as a "gavur padişah" (infidel sultan) constitutes a form of political and ideological defamation. The historical sources of the era lack statements or terminology describing him as "gavur padişah." Conversely, he was addressed with epithets such as "the Great," "the Reformer," ashâb-ı mie (those who appear once a century to mentor their society), and müessis-i sânî (the second founder), which reflect his administrative approach and objectives, along with his literary pseudonym Adlî.

In both national and international literature, one may encounter authors who critique the dissolution of the Janissary Corps (Vak'a-yı Hayriyye, 1826) by offering simplistic rationales, such as the corps' seniority, their distinctive üsküf headwear, their attire, the presence of the mehter band, or even their saddles. There is no scope for romanticism in these considerations; that is to say, the foundational purpose and principal responsibility of an army are to guarantee the nation's security. In this context, the simplistic approach that disregards the inquiry into why the Janissaries—who had become accustomed to a series of defeats—consistently obstructed initiatives to implement "training and discipline" (talim ve tefennün), namely, modern military education and discipline that enhanced the strength of contemporary modern armies, and why these efforts resulted in the execution of two sultans and numerous state officials, fails to hold up under scrutiny of logic and historical evidence. It is also important to note that the mehter band—frequently associated with the Ottoman State and among the initial aspects that may be recalled—was primarily employed as a tool for psychological warfare and a mechanism for strategic maneuvering.

In conducting a pragmatic evaluation of Mahmud II's reign, it can be generally observed that the Tanzimat reforms, typically attributed to the rule of Sultan Abdülmecid, are overshadowed by the profound transformations executed during the era of Mahmud II. The transition towards a cabinet system commenced with the establishment of ministries (nezarets); the dissolution of the Janissary Corps and the formation of a modern army known as the Asakir-i Mansure-i Muhammediye; the execution of initial population and land censuses to ascertain military capabilities and tax resources; the publication of the first official Turkish-language newspaper, Takvim-i Vekayi; the reestablishment of permanent embassies in prominent European capitals; the creation of the Translation Office (Tercüme Odası) driven by bureaucratic and diplomatic requirements; the institution of quarantine protocols

to mitigate the transmission of infectious diseases; the establishment of a postal route from Üsküdar to Izmit; the initiation of official provincial inspections to evaluate the overall condition of the nation and gauge public sentiment; the adoption of passport regulations; the mandatory establishment of primary education and the founding of early secondary schools (rüşdiyes); the sending of students overseas for educational purposes; the establishment of military and medical institutions, such as the Medical and Military Academies, along with educational entities like the Mekteb-i Maarif-i Adliye and the Mekteb-i Ulûm-i Edebiyye, to train personnel needed by the new bureaucracy; the enactment of legislation aimed at combating bribery and corruption, as well as the introduction of salaries for civil servants; the reformation and modernization of the financial system; the abolition of the dreaded confiscation system (müsadere) and the adoption of appointments and dismissals based on merit; the establishment of various consultative councils (including the Military Council, the Babıali Council, the Supreme Council of Judicial Ordinances, the Council of Public Works, and the Quarantine Council) designed to enhance consultation and collective expertise; and ultimately, the transformation of the Grand Vizierate, with some of its functions transferred to newly established institutions—these extensive bureaucratic reforms collectively represented the fundamental components of this transformative process.

In contrast to the multifaceted reform process previously delineated, it may be asserted that the Tanzimat period predominantly focused on the specifics of this continuous transformation. In this framework, the onset of the Tanzimat period is not marked by the proclamation of the Gülhane Hatt-ı Hümayunu on November 3, 1839, under the rule of Sultan Abdülmecid, but instead by the reign of Mahmud II itself. Furthermore, Sultan Mahmud instituted comprehensive reforms and designated this significant transformation as "Tanzimat." Expressions present in archival materials and chronicles from the era, such as "Tanzimât-ı Hayriyye ve umûr-i câriyye" (the benevolent regulations and current matters) and "Tanzimât-ı Hayriyye'nin müzâkeresine bed' ü mübâşeret" (initiating discussions on the benevolent regulations), substantiate this claim. Therefore, deeply ingrained clichés and overly simplistic, formulaic explanations that ascribe the Tanzimat movement and the Gülhane Hatt-ı Hümayunu solely to Sultan Abdülmecid, and particularly to Mustafa Reşid Pasha, urgently require re-evaluation.

The era during which the most critical measures were implemented to adopt the "new" amidst ambivalence and revitalization within Ottoman modernization



is unequivocally the reign of Mahmud II. Undoubtedly, this resolution was also supported by the reform traditions inherited from preceding eras. It is feasible to characterize the reign of Mahmud II using three interconnected concepts and terms originating from the same root: "Nizam (Order) - Intizam (Discipline) - Tanzimat (Reorganization)." Within this framework, "Nizam" denotes the conventional reform trajectory and the neoclassical heritage predating Mahmud II's reign; "Intizam" indicates the establishment of a centralized state—the culminating objective of civil and military reforms implemented during his reign—along with the quest for order and stability; finally, the notion of "Tanzimat" signifies a shift away from traditional paradigms towards institutional and cultural adaptation to the contemporary world.

An additional significant observation is that the allergic reactions and complications resulting from innovations introduced in the prior period were regarded as valuable lessons, ensuring that each subsequent step taken in the pursuit of innovation was protected under the conservative and calming influence of the characteristic "hayr" (good). It is noteworthy that events and institutions such as *Vak'a-i Hayriyye, Hayriyye Tüccarı, Hayratiye Köprüsü, Hayriyye Altını*, and ultimately all newly introduced regulations—while not yet formalized through an imperial decree or firman—were collectively described as "tanzimat-ı hayriyye" (beneficial reorganizations). To this inventory, one should also incorporate the state's provisional designation as "Devlet-i Ahmediye ve Saltanat-ı Muhammediye" and the nomenclature of the newly formed army as "Asâkir-i Mansûre-i Muhammediye," both indicative of a shared purpose and sensitivity. Consequently, it may be asserted that a meticulously deliberate approach was employed in the formulation of political discourse, public relations, and public diplomacy.

Considerable progress was achieved through the extensive reform program implemented during the reign of Mahmud II; nevertheless, the specific objectives in the fields of education and finance remained partially unrealized. In education, the imperative to sustain both the traditional (madrasah) and modern (mektep) systems concurrently in response to current conditions, along with opposition from the religious scholarly class (ilmiye) and conservative sentiments, impeded significant advancements in this domain. In the economic and financial domain, the expenditures incurred by the reform program—which significantly altered the structural and institutional foundations of the Empire—coupled with the substantial erosion in the purchasing power of currency due to adulteration practices (tağşiş), effectively

constituting a state-started devaluation leading to persistent inflation, resulted in considerable harm. Political obstacles including the Egyptian Question, the perceived threat from Russia, the utilization of these issues by Britain as a form of coercion and leverage, and the Treaty of Balta Liman (1838), which significantly weakened the traditional Ottoman market by eliminating its competitiveness, collectively contributed to this deterioration. Moreover, the setback encountered in the Ottoman-Russian War of 1828-29, the vulnerability experienced in response to the forces dispatched by Mehmed Ali Pasha of Kavala—formally recognized as "Governor of Egypt" in official documents yet who twice invaded Anatolia in 1832 and 1839, overpowering Ottoman central armies—and the subsequent political maneuvering and foreign involvement focused on Britain, France, and Russia, illustrate that the objective of establishing a centralized and modernized state adept at competing militarily with its adversaries was not entirely realized.

The reign of Sultan Abdülmecid, which spanned approximately 22 years from 1839 to 1861 and during which the Gülhâne Hatt-ı Hümâyunu (Tanzimât Edict, November 3, 1839) was issued in the fourth month of his accession, was marked by not only the political challenges inherited from his predecessor, Mahmud II, but also the disruptions resulting from the profound transformation of the traditional Ottoman system. The Gülhâne Hatt-ı Hümâyunu, a significant landmark in Turkish legal, administrative, and reform history, along with the Islahat Fermani (Reform Edict, February 18, 1856), which conferred the political and social statuses of non-Muslim Ottoman subjects under the protection of European powers and enabled the influx of Western capital into Turkey, were both issued during his reign.

Inherited from the reign of his father, Mahmud II, the state encountered numerous critical challenges during this period, including the Egypt Question and the Firârî Ahmed Pasha Incident, which significantly impaired both the land and naval forces; the Lebanon Events of 1845, which arose from the competition between Britain and France for dominance in the Middle East; the Refugee Issue stemming from the asylum provided to Hungarian and Polish nationalists fighting for independence from Austria during the 1848 revolutions; the Holy Places Problem (Makâmât-ı Mübâreke Issue), which originated from the Catholic-Orthodox dispute in Jerusalem and escalated into a crisis due to interventions by France and Russia, ultimately precipitating the Crimean War (1853–56); the external debt spiral induced by the substantial financial strain of the war, which rapidly developed into a fiscal crisis; unrest in Jeddah and Montenegro in 1858; the conflict between



Druze and Maronites in Lebanon and Syria commencing in 1860, which, owing to foreign interventions, evolved into another international crisis; and the Kuleli Incident of 1859, a coup attempt narrowly averted and perceived as a response to the opposition generated by the Tanzimat and Islahat Edicts within the Muslim community. These incidents are noteworthy events of the period.

Initially, Sultan Abdülmecid exhibited a relatively subdued political presence owing to his youth and lack of experience; he was notably constrained in leveraging the benefits of his accession to the throne, which occurred without the risk of regency or coups—referred to as "ascending without the Janissaries"—primarily due to the antagonism between the conservative-liberal and traditionalist-reformist factions, as embodied by Grand Vizier Hüsrev Mehmed Pasha and Foreign Minister Mustafa Reşid Pasha. Subsequently, Sultan Abdülmecid effectively mediated between these factions through the Tanzimat bureaucracy, and his rule was marked by considerable reforms. These can be generally summarized as follows: the office of Grand Vizier was reinstated from its former status as Başvekalet; governmental affairs were administered by the Meclis-i Hâs (also known as the Meclis-i Vükelâ), which consisted of ministers; the İltizâm tax farming system was abolished and replaced by the Muhassıllık system; in 1840, the inaugural paper currency (kāime nakdiyye) was introduced into circulation; notable advancements were made in the military domain with the enactment of the Tensikât-ı Askeriyye Law in 1843; Sultan Abdülmecid conducted provincial tours in 1844 and 1846, mirroring his father's actions, to evaluate the nation's condition and directly address the grievances of the populace; the Meclis-i Vâlâ was convened annually with a speech delivered by the Sultan; to underscore the significance of education, the Sultan personally attended school examinations; private audiences with foreign ambassadors were conducted by appointment; for the first time, Ottoman sultans accepted foreign orders and decorations, such as the French Legion of Honour and the British Order of the Garter; alongside the pre-existing Sharia courts, communal courts, and consular courts, nizamiye (secular) courts were established; with the objective of developing a modern state and bureaucracy, selected Western laws were adopted through translation and adaptation; contemporary budgetary practices were implemented; primary and secondary education was expanded nationally to include female students; vocational schools and institutions for teacher training were established; the Encümen-i Dâniş (Academy of Sciences), representing the first scientific academy, was founded in 1850; a decision was made to establish Darülfünun as the inaugural university project; and

the first private newspaper, Ceride-i Havadis, commenced publication. Indicators reflecting the increasing Westernizing trend of modernization emerged during his reign. Nevertheless, inadequate initiatives to mitigate luxury consumption, extravagance, and international borrowing resulted in a considerable financial burden for his successors.

One of the most impactful and contentious initiatives during the rule of Sultan Abdülmecid was unequivocally the promulgation of the Tanzimat and Islahat edicts, with the Kuleli Incident—a thwarted coup attempt arising from considerable Muslim resistance to the Islahat Edict—serving as a salient outcome. The Gülhâne Hatt-ı Hümâyunu represents a significant milestone in the modernization of the Ottoman Empire during the nineteenth century. Notwithstanding its emphatic invocation of Sharī'ah law in the preamble, it functions as a manifesto for the reforms necessitated by the modern era and signifies a formal departure from the traditional administrative and legal framework referred to as the "old law" (Kānûn-ı kadîm). The edict's statement "to completely alter and rejuvenate the former principles" (usûl-ı atîkayı bütün bütün tağyîr ve tecdîd) underscores this transformation, while its sporadic allusions to Islamic law and tradition may be interpreted as tactical maneuvers intended to alleviate resistance from conservative and status quo-oriented factions towards the forthcoming reforms.

Fundamentally focused on the rule of law and anchored in a unitary framework, the Tanzimat project sought to integrate all ethnic and religious groups under the banner of *Ottomanism*; nonetheless, owing to its historical and traditional complexities, the endeavor experienced fluctuations, hesitancy, and challenges in implementation. In the nineteenth century—an era characterized by escalating nationalism and extensive calls for the establishment of nation-states—the Ottoman state apparatus, functioning as a multiethnic and multicultural monarchy cognizant of the need to develop a unified political identity grounded in the principles of the rule of law and equality, aimed to achieve this objective through the promulgation of the Tanzimat and Islahat edicts. Unsurprisingly, the promulgation of the Islahat Edict garnered external pressure, intervention, and coercion related to the incorporation of non-Muslims as equal citizens within the administrative, legal, and economic frameworks. However, such criticisms should consider that approximately half of the Ottoman population during that period comprised non-Muslims, and from the viewpoint of the Sublime Porte (Bâbıâlî), no strategy was more effective in deterring this significant group from seeking secession from the empire.



Furthermore, the Ottoman state lacked the requisite strength in all aspects to withstand foreign intervention and influence. Leaving aside the external threats predominantly emanating from Russia and Austria, it is pertinent to remember that the Governor of Egypt, Muhammad Ali Pasha of Kavala, twice invaded Anatolia and vanquished the central Ottoman forces at Konya and Nizip, that the alliance of England, France, and Piedmont was indispensable for Ottoman resistance against Russia during the Crimean War, and that the empire's extended presence in this region was partly attributable to geopolitical dynamics.

The Gülhâne Edict, issued by the sultan in the form of a classical justice-discipline (*adaletnâme*), was designed to mitigate separatist movements in the Balkans, obtain the backing of European powers in addressing the persistent internal challenge presented by the Egyptian Question, and, most significantly, to restructure state-society relations administratively and legally, transcending traditional, religion-based classifications. In this context, Mustafa Reşid Pasha was assigned an essential task; unquestionably, his impact on this procedure was considerable. Nevertheless, it is implausible to assert that a junior bureaucrat independently drafted and promulgated a political document that fundamentally redefined and repositioned the state and society, particularly under the Sultan's name, without achieving consensus among the palace, religious scholars (ulema), and other stakeholders.[2] Notwithstanding its imperfections, the fundamental tenets of the Tanzimat Edict—a term widely recognized in our historiography—were established through a consensus among the palace, religious scholars (ulema), and civil bureaucracy, after roughly five months of preparation and deliberation. This process was not exclusively dictated by external forces nor unilaterally commenced by a bureaucrat. Disregarding this context facilitates the interpretation of the Gülhâne Hatt-ı Hümâyunu as a text formulated during the August 1839 negotiations in London

[2] On the contrary, the announcement of a manifesto containing such important provisions was the product of a serious preparation and consultation process. First of all, it should be underlined that a similar hatt-ı hümâyun had been on the agenda in 1838 during the reign of Mahmud II, but was postponed due to hesitation. Sultan Abdülmecid had emphasized the main principles of the Gülhâne Hatt-ı Hümâyun, such as the rule of law, avoiding bribery, not burdening the people with unlawful heavy taxes, safety and justice for all, regardless of ethnic and religious discrimination, in his inauguration hat-ı hümâyun issued on 17 July 1839. Moreover, the articles in the memorandum, which was drafted in a meeting held in Bâbıâli under the chairmanship of Grand Vizier Hüs- rev Mehmed Pasha and attended by more than thirty high-level bureaucrats and representatives of the ulema, and approved by the Sultan, almost exactly overlap with the text that was later announced as the Gülhâne Hatt-ı Hümâyun (Tanzimât Edict).

involving England's Foreign Secretary Lord Palmerston and Mustafa Reşid Pasha, or as a document influenced by Lord Stratford de Redcliffe (Canning), the British ambassador in Istanbul. Nevertheless, this methodology overlooks systemic chronic issues and intrinsic dynamics, resulting in an ultimately flawed interpretation that conflicts with historical actualities.

It is essential to acknowledge that the commonly held belief that the Gülhâne Hatt-ı Hümâyunu established legal equality between Muslims and non-Muslims requires a critical reevaluation. Contrary to the prevailing perception, the Gülhâne Edict did not establish legal equality between Muslims and non-Muslims; instead, it ensured the protection of fundamental human rights under the auspices of the state, irrespective of ethnic and religious differences. In fact, the term "dhimmi law," which was formulated under Islamic legal principles, was neither repealed nor suspended by this edict. The regulations governing the collection of jizya and kharaj taxes, the execution of Muslims who had renounced Islam, the rejection of non-Muslim testimony in legal proceedings, and the marginalization of non-Muslims from civil and military spheres remained unaltered.

These issues would later form the primary grounds for European powers' pressure demanding the proclamation of the Islahat Edict. The Tanzimat and Islahat edicts, which sought to establish an Ottoman nation founded on the principles of the rule of law and equality within an empire encompassing diverse ethnic and religious groups, included provisions that had the potential to transform the traditional social structure, thereby inciting unrest among the Muslim majority (millet-i hâkime) and select privileged non-Muslim communities (milel-i mahkûme) within the confessional system. This dissatisfaction was further intensified following the 1853-56 Crimean War, attributable to the nation's declining economic circumstances, inflation, and significant rises in the prices of essential food items, coupled with the elite's embrace of Western-style (alafranga) lifestyles characterized by opulent consumption and extravagance. The Islahat Edict, issued on February 18, 1856, in response to pressure from European powers, conferred upon non-Muslims considerable rights in the areas of religious and sectarian security, along with administrative, legal, economic, and social domains, while also abolishing the dhimmi law, which inevitably elicited reactions from the Muslim population. Newly established rights, including the elimination of the jizya tax, authorization for non-Muslims to attain state positions, the right to property ownership, the conferral of legal jurisdiction to the Patriarchate, participation in provincial councils,



and compensated military service, incited this resistance. A clandestine alliance of conspirators identified as the Fedâiler Cemiyeti, established to overthrow Sultan Abdülmecid and elevate Abdülaziz, exemplified this response. Established in early 1859 by various religious leaders, military personnel, government officials, and civilians, the covert organization experienced a swift growth in membership until the apprehension of key individuals based on intelligence received, thereby precluding the execution of the coup. Given that its leaders were prosecuted at the Kuleli Barracks, this occurrence is frequently designated as the Kuleli Incident.[3]

It could be argued that the Tanzimat reforms were motivated more by pragmatic needs than by structured planning. The foremost challenges encountered by the Tanzimat reformers included a deficiency in qualified personnel to assimilate and enact the reforms, the presence of an unstable financial infrastructure,

[3] This organisation, which aimed to put an end to Abdülmecid's reign, was composed of military officers of Caucasian origin, such as Hüseyin Dâim Pasha, the head of the Dâr-ı Şûrâ of the Bâb-ı Seraskerî, Albanian Câferdem Pasha, Tophâne Mufti Bekir Efendi, and Major Râsim Efendi, a member of the Manufacturing Council, It was founded by Ârif Bey, one of the Tophane clerks, Sheikh Ahmed Efendi of Süleymaniyeli, a professor at the Beyazıt Madrasa, Nasûhî Efendi, one of the teachers at the Fâtih Madrasa, Sheikh Feyzullah Efendi of Hezargrad, and about twenty-five members of the Tophâne marshalate. It is stated that Şinâsi, one of the Tanzimat poets, was also a member of this society. The head of the society, who believed that he would change the fate of the country with a coup d'état, was Sheikh Ahmed Efendi, a professor at Bayezid Madrasah. It was from him that the idea of establishing a society to organise an assassination plot against Abdülmecid came. Hüseyin Dâim Pasha, who was recruited to the society in order to utilise his influence and money since he was in the rank of Ferik, was appointed as the vice-president. The most active member of the society was Ârif Bey, one of the Tophâne-i Âmire clerks, who was also the general secretary of the society. Ârif Bey's main duties included making propaganda on behalf of the society, writing declarations and recruiting supporters. The founders of the movement, who needed a military backing in order for the movement to succeed, succeeded in recruiting commanders in important positions such as Câferdem Pasha and Râsim Bey. Influential people such as Sheikh Feyzullah from Hezargrad and Sheikh İsmâil from Kütahyalı were accepted into the society to ensure popular support. Those who became members of the organisation were asked to sign a pledge that read "I have accepted the covenant between me and Sheikh Ahmed of Suleymaniye and I am a muâhid fedâ'i". For this reason, the members of the society were also called Fedâiler. However, the foundation, purpose and activities of the society were reported to the government by Mirlivâ Hasan Pasha. On 14 September 1859, while they were meeting in Kı- lıç Ali Paşa Mosque, the government arrested the members of the organisation with a raid. Hasan Pasha, who exposed the organisation, was promoted to ferik. The members caught red-handed were taken to the Kuleli Barracks (today's Kuleli Military High School headquarters) in Çengelköy. Since the investigation and judgement were carried out there, this incident went down in history as the Kuleli Incident.

and an inadequate timeframe designated for the implementation of the reforms. Furthermore, they postponed intervening in the education sector, reluctant to disrupt the system governed by the Sheikh al-Islam and the Ministry of Religious Endowments (Evkaf Nezareti). The supplementary expenditures incurred by the reforms, the inability to implement an efficient tax system, the proliferation of bureaucratic cadres, and concurrent profligacy progressively intensified the financial crisis. The Tanzimat reformers sought to enact reforms amidst significant internal and external challenges. The continuous interference of foreign ambassadors in Istanbul, coupled with the unyielding political competition among senior state officials, obstructed the reform process from acquiring public endorsement. As a result, the process advanced at a slow pace, often nearing periods of suspension, while frequent reorganizations within existing institutions, along with repeated dismissals and appointments in the bureaucracy, rendered the administrative framework ineffective.

Sultan Abdülaziz (r. 1861–1876) was another pivotal figure during the Tanzimat period. In contrast to his brother and predecessor Abdülmecid, Sultan Abdülaziz, who favored a simple lifestyle and eschewed extravagance, garnered significant public support through his disciplined conduct while serving as crown prince. His powerful and commanding presence as the incumbent sultan enhanced public trust in him. Conservative groups, perceiving a decline in their influence during the preceding reign, viewed him as a potential Yavuz (the Resolute). Upon his accession to the throne, Sultan Abdülaziz confronted significant challenges within the Ottoman Empire, including economic crises, the Karadağ Rebellion, instability in Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria, Crete, and Herzegovina, as well as the Druze-Maronite conflict in Lebanon—issues that necessitated immediate attention. Initially, Sultan Abdülaziz committed to eschewing the establishment of a harem by restricting himself to a single consort, purportedly to aid economic recovery; he forbade the use of gold, silver, and other precious items within the palace; announced that one-third of the Imperial Treasury's revenues would be designated for the state treasury; exhibited a zero-tolerance stance towards bribery and corruption; and sought to reduce the excessive size of the civil service.

Sultan Abdülaziz was the first Ottoman sovereign to embark on international journeys with the objective of broadening the empire's historically restricted interaction with the external world, which had typically been limited to the capital and its immediate vicinity. It is significant that Ottoman caliph-sultans, with the



exception of military expeditions or religious pilgrimages such as the Hajj, did not undertake such journeys nor did they venture into the territories of Dar al-Harb (lands of war) as visitors. This exceptional measure merits recognition. In this context, his domestic journey to Egypt in 1863 and his European tour encompassing Western capitals in 1867 hold considerable significance. During his visit to Egypt, Sultan Abdülaziz aimed to avert the secession of this vital province from the Ottoman Empire. The European tour was started by an invitation from Emperor Napoleon III of France to participate in the inauguration of the International Paris Industrial Exhibition. Taking advantage of this opportunity to mitigate negative Western public perception of the Ottomans and Turks, and to ease the intensified foreign pressure and intervention that ensued after the announcement of the Reform Edict (Islahat Fermanı), Sultan Abdülaziz extended his travels in response to an invitation from Queen Victoria of England. Commencing on June 21, 1867, the European tour encompassed visits to France and England, along with additional stops in Belgium, Prussia, and Austria, prior to the sultan's return to Istanbul after roughly six weeks.

Confronted by the alliance of England and France—whose external pressures and interventions were common of the Tanzimat period—and the parallel actions of Russia, which operated under the guise of its Pan-Slavism policy, along with the pragmatic Austria, keen to obtain its portion of the benefits, Sultan Abdülaziz perceived the survival of the state as contingent upon the existence of a formidable army capable of competing with its adversaries and a vigorous, autonomous economy based on production. To achieve this objective, he exerted considerable effort in enacting a reform agenda that encompassed the modernization of the military, the construction of new barracks, the procurement of advanced weaponry and equipment, the development of a formidable navy integrating armored technologies, the fortification of borders, the enhancement of military education, and the engagement of international experts throughout the initiative.

In the civilian domain, the formation of the Industrial Reform Commission (Islâh-ı Sanayi Komisyonu) aimed to formulate a strategic plan for the nation's advancement and the rejuvenation of economic activities. A significant mobilization was started for the development of railways, accompanied by the extensive expansion of telegraph lines in the domain of communications. Significant initiatives encompassed the operation of vessels on the Danube and Tigris rivers, the development of port facilities in Istanbul, Constanța, and Varna, along with the

construction of a wharf in İzmir. The establishment of the Directorate of Navigation (İdâre-i Azîziyye), the provision of concessions to the philanthropic organization Şirket-i Hayriyye for the operation of vessels on the Bosphorus, the inauguration of the Galata Tunnel for operational purposes, and the modernization of the Istanbul fire brigade under the leadership of Count Ödön Széchenyi Pasha represent noteworthy advancements. Within the realm of education, the restructuring of the educational system received significant emphasis. The establishment of the Mekteb-i Tıbbiye-i Şâhâne as the inaugural civilian medical institution, the Mekteb-i Mahrec-i Aklâm as a training facility for civil servants, the emergence of girls' secondary schools (İnâs Rüşdiyeleri), and the founding of the Mekteb-i Sultânî (Galatasaray High School), which provided instruction in French and implemented coeducational practices, were of paramount importance. Moreover, the initiation of the first female teacher training school, known as Dârülmuallimât, the formal opening of the first university, albeit short-lived, as Dârülfünûn, the focus on vocational and technical training through the creation of industrial schools, the provision of support for the establishment of Dârüşşafaka to educate orphaned Muslim children, and the modernization of the Imperial Museum (Müze-i Hümâyun) represented other significant advancements. Moreover, significant alterations were observed in the rhythms of daily life and the emergence of new socialization venues.

During the tenure of Sultan Abdülaziz, notable advancements were achieved in the areas of administrative and legal reforms. From 1864 to 1871, the conventional provincial system was dismantled and substituted by the vilayet system. In 1868, the Supreme Council of Judicial Ordinances (Meclis-i Vâlâ-yı Ahkâm-ı Adliyye) was bifurcated into the Council of State (Şûrâ-yı Devlet) and the Court of Judicial Ordinances (Dîvân-ı Ahkâm-ı Adliyye), thereby delineating administrative and judicial roles within the council and restraining specific prerogatives of the Sultan. This reform represented an essential advancement towards constitutionalism within the Ottoman Empire. Simultaneously, in accordance with the reception of Western legal codes during the Tanzimat era, the translation of the French Civil Code (Code Civil) was commenced; however, it encountered resistance, culminating in the formation of the Mecelle Society under the guidance of Ahmed Cevdet Pasha. The Society generated the Mecelle-i Ahkâm-ı Adliyye, which served as a civil code. Another significant reform was the 1868 decree that conferred property ownership rights to foreigners, with the exception of the Hijaz region. In the agricultural sector, significant initiatives were implemented to subsidize and assist farmers and artisans via the formation of local credit institutions,



such as the Memleket and Emniyet Sandıkları beginning in 1863, which subsequently developed into the Menafi Sandıkları and ultimately culminated in the Ziraat Bank. Furthermore, a notable advancement in the financial sector was the authorization given to a French-British consortium in 1863 to found the Bank-i Osmânî-yi Şâhâne (Imperial Ottoman Bank).

A notable development during the reign of Sultan Abdülaziz was the rise of an intellectual opposition. Within the context of journalistic endeavors undertaken by private newspapers and publishing firms, an increasing public awareness led to the emergence of two factions identified as the Meslek and the New Ottomans (commonly termed the Young Turks in the international press). The primary complaints of the opposition encompassed external pressures and interventions, an exacerbating financial crisis, a perceived ineffectiveness in addressing uprisings in the Balkans, and stringent censorship applied to the press (Kararnâme-i Âlî, March 5, 1867). This opposition, bolstered by financial and political backing from Mustafa Fazıl Pasha—who was displeased with alterations to the Egyptian succession and inheritance decree—transferred to European capitals and rapidly emerged as a topic of international public discourse.

The extensive reforms implemented during the reign of Sultan Abdülaziz invariably led to a considerable financial strain. The legacy of the Crimean War, along with the resultant surge of interest due to external debts, progressively exacerbated the fiscal crisis. The modernization of the military, the erection of impressive edifices such as the Çırağan and Beylerbeyi palaces, the erosion of principal sums in each international loan due to inadequate creditworthiness, and the accrual of high interest rates as a consequence of defaults necessitated the procurement of additional loans from Galata bankers at extremely high interest rates, rendering bankruptcy inevitable. As a result, the moratorium mandated in 1875 induced significant disruption in both domestic and international public opinion and financial markets, eliciting strong anti-Ottoman sentiment; European investors possessing Ottoman bonds took part in extensive protests outside Turkish embassies.

The economic crisis and social unrest within the Ottoman Empire resulted in political conflict and a confrontation between the Sublime Porte and the Palace. Prominent individuals of the era, including Midhat Pasha, Mütercim Rüşdü Pasha, Süleyman Pasha, Hüseyin Avni Pasha, and Hasan Hayrullah Efendi, attributed the nation's mismanagement to Sultan Abdülaziz and posited that his replacement with Prince Murad would significantly alleviate the problems. The publications

produced by the Meslekçiler and the Young Ottomans, in conjunction with the surreptitious incitement of madrasa students, started student movements in the capital that served as preliminary measures towards the envisioned alteration of the throne. Following the acquisition of the requisite fatwa from religious authorities, Commander-in-Chief Hüseyin Avni Pasha surrounded Dolmabahçe Palace with troops, while simultaneously, loyalty was professed to Crown Prince Murad Efendi at the Bâbıseraskeri. Incapable of reacting to these developments, Sultan Abdülaziz was moved from Dolmabahçe Palace to Topkapı Palace and, at his own request, was later transferred to the Feriye Palace on June 1, 1876. What initially seemed to be a standard deposition and confinement underwent a significant transformation three days later when Sultan Abdülaziz was discovered in his chambers with his wrists cut. Owing to constraints instituted by the principal actor Hüseyin Avni Pasha, only a cursory autopsy was carried out, and reports presented the event as a suicide. The death of the former sultan was reported as a suicide in the June 6, 1878 edition of the *Cerîde-i Havâdis* newspaper. Ten days subsequent to this tragic incident, as cabinet members convened at Midhat Pasha's residence, an attack perpetrated by Circassian Hasan, the brother of Nesrin Kadınefendi, a consort of the deposed sultan, resulted in the deaths of Commander-in-Chief Hüseyin Avni Pasha and Foreign Minister Raşid Pasha, while Naval Minister Ahmed Pasha from Kayseri sustained injuries.

The circumstances surrounding the demise of Sultan Abdülaziz have maintained their contentious character. The coup plotters had not foreseen that Sultan Murad V, who assumed the throne amidst political turmoil and the enigmatic death of his predecessor, would be unable to achieve recovery despite experiencing trauma and undergoing treatment. The junta, compelled to swear loyalty to Prince Abdülhamid, either did not anticipate the resurgence of this matter or overlooked it as a result of their strengthened authority. Having solidified his reign and established unquestionable authority, Sultan Abdülhamid started the prosecution of those involved in the demise of Abdülaziz under the designation "the murdered sovereign." In the 1881 Yıldız Trials, it was concluded that Sultan Abdülaziz was not a victim of suicide but was instead murdered under the pretense of suicide, leading to the imposition of death sentences for key individuals implicated, particularly Midhat Pasha. Nonetheless, these sentences were altered to exile by Sultan Abdülhamid. Midhat Pasha, an emblematic figure of the judicial system who was exiled to Ta'if to fulfill his punishment, perished under circumstances similarly questionable to those of Sultan Abdülaziz.



Strides Towards a Nation State (1876-1923)

In 1876, referred to as the "Year of Three Sultans," Abdulhamid II came to the throne following the brief, ninety-three-day rule of Murad V, who was considered incurable notwithstanding multiple treatments. Abdulhamid agreed to the terms presented by Midhat Pasha and initially assumed a conciliatory position, abstaining from direct conflict with the coup organizers and influential power-brokers who had triumph his ascension to the throne. The political legacy he inherited from his predecessors was notably unpromising: a moratorium announced merely a year prior, an escalating financial crisis, uprisings in the Balkans intensified by foreign intervention and protectionism, and an pressing request from the junta that triumph his ascent for a constitutional framework—all necessitated urgent consideration. The advocacy for a constitutional-parliamentary system, which entailed limiting the Sultan's authority and augmenting the operational autonomy of bureaucratic oversight, emerged as the central emphasis of the reform movement. Subsequent to Midhat Pasha's promotion to the position of Grand Vizier on December 19, 1876, and during the Tersane Conference held in Istanbul to tackle the Balkan Crisis, the Ottoman constitution (Kānûn-ı Esâsî) was officially promulgated with significant ceremonial pomp on December 23, 1876. This signified the official transition from the Tanzimat period to the First Constitutional Era. Nevertheless, this initiative, imbued with optimism and aimed at preventing foreign intervention in the Balkans, did not achieve the intended effect on the Great Powers and failed to address the fundamental, persistent problems. As the conflict between the bureaucracy and the Sultan deepened, Abdulhamid II, invoking the exceptional circumstances arising from the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–78 (commonly referred to as the 93 War), indefinitely adjourned the parliament on February 13, 1878, thereby effectively concluding the constitutional parliamentary system and re-establishing autocratic governance.

As a power struggle transpired between the Sublime Porte and the Palace in the imperial capital, external developments progressed in accordance with their inherent trajectory—specifically, the intensification of the Eastern Question fueled by the emergence of Pan-Slavism and the intensified endeavors to partition the legacy of the "Sick Man of Europe." This threat, which materialized into a tangible reality with the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–78 (referred to as the 93 War), subjected the Ottoman Empire to considerable political, economic, and social pressures. The treaties of San Stefano (March 3, 1878) and Berlin (July 13, 1878),

executed following the conflict, signified the onset of the empire's disintegration. It would hardly be an overstatement to assert that the Ottoman Empire commenced to undergo systematic exploitation after the Berlin Congress. A succession of interconnected occurrences corroborates this claim: the acknowledgment of sovereignty for Serbia, Montenegro, and Romania; the conferral of autonomy upon Bosnia-Herzegovina and Bulgaria; the intensification of the Straits Question; the framing of the Armenian Question within the context of Eastern Anatolia reforms; the provisional cession of Cyprus to Great Britain—leading to its ultimate relinquishment—in return for backing at Berlin; the unilateral occupation of Tunisia by France (1881) and of Egypt by Britain (1882), accompanied by subsequent involvement in Sudan; the Cretan Uprising and the Greco-Turkish War (1896–1897); the issue of Eastern Rumelia and Bulgaria's proclamation of independence (1908); Austria's annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina (1908); the Macedonian Question; the Italo-Turkish War concerning Tripolitania (1911); the Balkan Wars (1912–13); and ultimately, World War I (1914–18), which brought the empire to the verge of collapse. In addition to the substantial financial costs associated with these conflicts, the large-scale migrations from captured territories profoundly transformed the demographic composition of major urban centers including Istanbul, Edirne, Bursa, Trabzon, Samsun, Aydın, and İzmir. This abrupt and pronounced demographic transition in the empire's commercial and industrial centers presented significant challenges in areas such as infrastructure, nutrition, housing, healthcare, education, and employment—resulting in intricate and challenging issues in both the economic and social domains.

A distinguishing characteristic of the Ottoman Empire during its period of disintegration was the escalating economic crisis, which progressively developed into a chronic issue and culminated in a de facto occupation through the appropriation of Ottoman finances by foreign powers. This intervention, referred to by the euphemistic phrases "Foreign Financial Supervision" or "Administration of the Ottoman Public Debt" (Düyûn-ı Umûmiyye), was unprecedented in the contemporary "civilized world." Prior to the reign of Sultan Abdulhamid II, the Ottoman Empire experienced a significant debt spiral between 1854 and 1874, culminating in a declaration of bankruptcy with the moratorium of October 6, 1875, thereby signaling its financial collapse to both internal and external stakeholders. This determination elicited significant indignation, especially among international investors possessing Ottoman bonds, and it intensified an assertive anti-Ottoman campaign within European public discourse and the foreign media. In this context, the Ottoman government,



having lost access to external credit sources, endeavored to mitigate the prevailing financial panic while also striving to fund a possible conflict stemming from the Balkan Crisis by reverting to the issuance of unbacked paper currency.

Upon Sultan Abdulhamid II's accession to the throne, he inherited the complexities of the Balkan Crisis and, notwithstanding his endeavors, was unable to avert the onset of the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–78. The immense financial strain imposed by the war, coupled with considerable territorial concessions and onerous indemnities, exacerbated the instability of an already precarious economic framework, thereby intensifying the existing crisis through a marked decrease in state revenues. As an initial measure towards addressing the issue, a proposal was introduced to assign six essential revenue sources, collectively referred to as the Rüsûm-ı Sitte, to domestic creditors—specifically the Imperial Ottoman Bank and Galata bankers—via a ten-year repayment scheme, with any remaining funds being utilized to reimburse European bondholders. Nevertheless, this nationalistic approach elicited considerable resistance from international creditors. Notwithstanding, the Galata bankers instituted the Rüsûm-ı Sitte Administration and engaged an adept manager, Hamilton Long, to commence the collection of their dues from the designated tax revenues. In response to this development, foreign bondholders exerted pressure on their governments to insist on the transfer of the institution under their jurisdiction. Leveraging the implementation challenges of the Berlin Treaty, European powers increased their pressure on the Ottoman government. In reaction, the Sublime Porte declared a novel repayment scheme for international creditors on October 23, 1880. Subsequently, the Decree of Muharrem, promulgated on December 20, 1881, resulted in the formation of the Ottoman Public Debt Administration (Düyûn-ı Umûmiyye), whose governing board was primarily made up of representatives from foreign nations. The administration commenced its operations from a facility in Sirkeci that currently accommodates Istanbul Erkek Lisesi. Although the Muharrem Decree and the Düyûn-ı Umûmiyye institution were not supported by international agreements, the Ottoman government utilized this structure to facilitate a 54% decrease in the overall debt amount and a reduction in interest rates to 8%. By engaging directly with representatives of creditors instead of foreign nations, the Sublime Porte sought to curtail the possibility of direct foreign intervention under the pretext of debt collection.

Following the restructuring of its debt, the Ottoman Empire, motivated by economic imperatives, recommenced borrowing from international sources. During the period from 1886 to 1914, the empire obtained eighteen distinct loans, with

the funds primarily allocated to the financing of infrastructure and transportation initiatives—such as railways, ports, and irrigation canals—as well as, more notably, to the fulfillment of military expenses. During this time, the Ottoman Public Debt Administration (Düyûn-ı Umûmiyye) persistently gathered the designated revenues without disruption, utilizing more than 5,000 employees from 1882 to 1914. The Administration, which subjected Ottoman finances to foreign oversight, cannot be justified under any circumstances; its adverse effects on the empire's economic and political sovereignty are undeniable. Any potential solace may be derived from the partial mitigation of the overall debt burden and the enhanced utilization of public resources. Furthermore, as European creditors commenced receiving consistent payments, negative perceptions of the Ottoman Empire in international public opinion progressively decreased, and efforts to intervene in the empire's domestic matters under the guise of outstanding debts were notably reduced.



Image 5: Abdülhamid the II

(https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/turkiye/sultan-2-abdulhamid-ve- fatinin-103-yilinda-aniliyor/2139869)



In the waning years of the empire, Sultan Abdulhamid II occupied the throne for an extraordinarily extended duration of thirty-three years; however, he confronted numerous coup attempts throughout his rule. These encompassed schemes devised by the Stavridis-July Committee, the Cleanthi Scalieri–Aziz Bey Committee, and the notorious Çırağan Incident orchestrated by Ali Suavi, along with endeavors associated with Serasker Hüseyin Avni Pasha and Süleyman Pasha—both pivotal figures in the deposition of Sultan Abdulaziz—collectively referred to as the "Martyrs of Honor." Another significant challenge facing the Sultan was the increasing aspirations for higher education among the younger generation, motivated by the heritage of previous intellectual resistance movements such as the Meslekçiler and the Young Ottomans. Initially developing as student collectives within the military (Harbiye), medical (Tıbbiye), and civil service (Mülkiye) academies, these movements transformed into covert organizations by the early 1890s. Abdulhamid's marginalization of the Sublime Porte, along with the suspension of the Kanûn-ı Esâsî and the dissolution of the Meclis-i Mebusân, which effectively abandoned constitutional monarchy in favor of absolutism, resulted in profound disillusionment among liberal political circles, intellectuals, and students. The Sultan aimed to mitigate the influence of the bureaucratic elite at the Sublime Porte by employing strategies such as reassignments, monitoring, dismissals, and banishment, while simultaneously seeking to quell intellectual dissent—primarily manifested through the press—by implementing stringent censorship and utilizing a network of informants. Nevertheless, the quest for "Freedom," a pivotal slogan of the period, and the aspiration to restore a constitutional-parliamentary framework constituted the fundamental motivations for the dissident student movement.

The formation of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), which evolved into the organized political opposition against Sultan Abdulhamid II, is inextricably linked to the extensive political developments and modernization initiatives of the period. In a markedly unstable context influenced by ethnic, religious, and cultural diversity along with significant political divisions, Abdulhamid posited that the revitalization of the empire's past power could not be accomplished via a constitutional-parliamentary system, but instead through an authoritarian modernization initiative with himself at its core. In order to achieve this vision, he emphasized contemporary institutions of higher education, including the Civil Service School (Mülkiye), the Military Academy (Harbiye), and the Medical School (Tıbbiye), with the objective of training a skilled cadre committed to his project. Nevertheless, these institutions inadvertently generated a generation of dissidents

who ardently critiqued his authoritarian policies. In contrast to their predecessors, the Young Ottomans, this emergent generation of intellectuals and students eschewed the position of apolitical, subservient citizens, emphasizing instead the interpretation of concepts such as authority, rights, and the rule of law through the framework of Western liberal values and revolutionary ideologies—frequently at a significantly more radical level. This political position was not particularly surprising. It was fundamentally contradictory to anticipate that young individuals would achieve higher educational standards while simultaneously suppressing their political awareness or assuming they would remain immune to global ideologies, instead preserving unwavering allegiance to the Sultan and the monarchy. Likewise, it was excessively idealistic to expect that students dispatched abroad since the era of Mahmud II would return as mere automatons, transferring modern science and technology without also assimilating the ideological underpinnings that define Western civilization.

In the political arena, supplementary elements exacerbated the conflict between established and novel concepts, as well as tradition and advancement. Significantly, the concepts, educational philosophies, and policies of prominent individuals such as German General Colmar von der Goltz (Pasha), who was appointed director of the Military Academy (Harbiye) in June 1883 to enhance the officer corps to European standards, and Marko Pasha (Marko Apostolidis), who held the position of director of the Military Medical School (Askerî Tıbbiye) until his demise on November 2, 1888, exerted a considerable impact on the intellectual development of cadets in military academies. Early opposition movements derived their ideological framework and socio-political tenets from European revolutionary currents—especially the Jeune (Young) movement, which opposed repressive monarchical regimes and championed the rule of law and popular sovereignty, as well as from positivism and materialism. Motivated by these philosophies, they persistently advocated for the reinstatement of constitutional governance. Highlighting their perspective on Usûl-ı Meşveret, namely, the constitutional-parliamentary system, as the "guardian of human rights and the foundation of civilizational advancement," they ardently emphasized the pressing imperative for a shift towards representative governance.

A significant milestone in the trajectory of Turkish modernization, the Tanzimat era was by the first generation of reformers predominantly consisting of bureaucrats and intellectuals possessing bureaucratic expertise. In contrast, the second



generation of reformers originated from the newly established modern educational institutions established by their predecessors. This newly educated cohort exhibited a distinctly divergent perspective, motivated by an ambition to transform the idealized state and society depicted in literature into tangible realities. Due to their proficiency in foreign languages, the new generation was exposed to a diverse array of transformative ideas and movements that had become integral to political life in the West, including patriotism, anxieties regarding national survival, liberty, equality, justice, *nationalism, constitutionalism, experimental science, naturalism, positivism, realism,* and *biological materialism*. Undoubtedly, this exposure resulted in considerable transformations in their views on the state, regime, religion, the individual, society, and traditional values.

The year 1895 holds considerable importance as the period in which the Ottoman Unity (İttihâd-ı Osmâni), first emerged as a student solidarity organization, transformed into a formal society, subsequently rebranded as the Committee of Union and Progress (İttihad ve Terakki). During this period, its charter was formulated, both national and international organizational frameworks were established, and promotional initiatives through media and publications commenced. Notwithstanding the regime's attempts to neutralize political opposition through the use of informants, surveillance, and stringent censorship, dissidents endeavored to articulate their political demands indirectly and clandestinely through ostensibly literary, scientific, and technological publications. As domestic opposition grew increasingly unviable, Unionists sought refuge abroad and persisted in their resistance through journalistic endeavors from cities such as Paris, London, Geneva, and Cairo, under the guidance of leaders including Ahmed Rıza Bey, Mizancı Murat Bey, İshak Sükuti, and Prince (Sultanzade) Sabahattin Bey, among others. Furthermore, through conventions conducted in 1902 and 1907, they aimed to integrate a cohesive and enhanced opposition movement.

Certain factions within the Young Turks, particularly the group directed by Prince Sabahattin, advocated for relatively liberal and separatist policies focused on the concepts of ittihâd-ı anâsır (union of elements) and teşebbüs-i şahsi (individual initiative), accompanied by a discourse emphasizing decentralization (adem-i merkezî). According to them, the only solution that can encompass all sectors of society and restore social cohesion and peace is the re-establishment of the constitutional regime (Meşrutiyet) and the revitalization of the constitutional-parliamentary system. In the interim, the unforeseen defeat of Russia—engaged in conflict

with Japan—in 1905, coupled with the Russian opposition's assertion that the fundamental cause of their defeat lay in the autocratic rule (istibdat), and the resultant formation of a legislative assembly (Duma), motivated the Committee of Union and Progress (İttihatçılar) to articulate their demands with greater assertiveness. Furthermore, the development of a comprehensive opposition in Iran, a Muslim nation governed by the Qajar dynasty, culminated in 1906 with the institution of a constitutional regime (meşrûtiyet-i meşrû'a), which significantly empowered the Young Turks and the İttihatçılar. The conviction that all domestic issues could be addressed and ethnic and religious disputes mitigated through the institution of a constitutional-parliamentary system and the integration of the military and the populace *(millet-i müsellaha*), thereby supplanting absolute or autocratic governance, emerged as an indisputable truth and objective for the opposition.

In this context, the Ottoman Committee of Progress and Union, which experienced multiple rebrandings, endorsed the Macedonia-focused structure of the Ottoman Liberty Society following their integration. By May 1908, the society had expanded to include more than 2,000 members in Macedonia and asserted through its declarations that should European powers fail to discontinue their intervention in the region under the pretense of "reforms," a "Revolution" would commence. The conference convened on June 9–10, 1908, in Reval—a city situated on the Baltic coast in what is now Estonia—between King Edward VII of England and Tsar Nicholas II of Russia was represented by societal figures to the public as the culminating phase in the division of the Ottoman Empire.

The Unionists (members of the Committee of Union and Progress, CUP), in addition to hanging proclamations on the walls in Thessaloniki and Monastir where they were dominant, distributed notices to the people and to consulates. According to the opposition, the reason for the calamities was the wrong policies of a 'tyrannical' ruler and the 'pathetic ones' clustered around him. The Unionists organized an assasination against Thessaloniki's central commander and the sultan's aide-de-camp lieutenant colonel Nazım Bey, and Şemsi Pasha who had been sent to discipline the partisans. The efforts of the counsel delegations sent upon the late June 1908 rebellion started in Monastir, Tikves and Resen under the leadership of prominent Unionists major Enver Bey and senior captain Niyazi Bey yielded no result. The Muslim inhabitants of Monastir rebelled on July 20 as a manifestation of civilian-military integration, reserve Anatolian troops dispatched to the region joined the ranks of the Unionists, and Tatar Osman Pasha, who had been sent



to suppress the rebellion, was arrested in Monastir by the rebels. Thereby the tensions escalated further. Besides, the Ferizaj demonstration of July 22 by a crowd of more than 20,000 demanding the proclamation of constitutionalism, organized by the Albanian Revolutionary Committees which had recently joined the ranks of Union and Progress, was an important development in that in showed how the phenomenon did not arise solely from the discontent of younf officers and that it had a social base.

Telegraph communications from the region demanding the proclamation of constitutionalism and restoration of the Basic Law began raining down on the Yıldız Palace. Meanwhile the Revolutionaries, in order to bring about the proclamation of constitutional regime, asked that all military and paramilitary forces prepare themselves to be able to move towards Istanbul by the end of July. Monastir center of the Union and Progress, seeing that central authority lacked the power to stop them, declared that if constitutionalism was not proclaimed by July 26, people and military units in the region would allegiance to crown prince Mehmed Reshad, meaning that they would no longer recognize Abdulhamid II as sultan. To show that this was no bluff, the Society proclaimed constitutionalism in Monastir on July 23 and publicized that it would do the same in Thessaloniki after two days. Abdulhamid II, after several consultative meetings concluding that he had no alternative in these circumstances, had to proclaim on 23 July 1908 constitutionalism for the second time.

The proclamation of the second constitutionalism, being an unexpected development, surprised the public at the beginning. The initial enthusiasm did not last long. People became confused, for the Revolutionaries had no road map. The principal matters creating unease were the Revolutionaries' weak base of empire-wide social support and the lacking proficiency and preparedness of the Freedom Heros (i.e. young officers) regarding civil politics, international relations, diplomacy and the running of the administrative mechanisms.

Moreover, on October 5, 1908, Austria's annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina, accompanied by Bulgaria's proclamation of independence and Crete's integration with Greece on the same day, disrupted the idyllic environment associated with the Constitutional regime and were documented as significant adversities. Notwithstanding the initial abolition of censorship, espionage, and informant practices by the Unionists, they swiftly reverted to these tactics to reinforce their authority. In the context of a series of political crises started by the Committee's pressure on the

government, the parliament commenced its sessions on December 17, 1908, subsequent to contentious elections conducted in the autumn of that year. Nevertheless, the new regime did not succeed in addressing discussions pertaining to the application of political power, its boundaries, representation, justice, and legitimacy.

The formation of various opposition groups, in addition to the Committee of Union and Progress, established a novel and peculiar circumstance in which a faction conventionally linked to opposition found itself compelled to engage with it. The Unionists, grappling with the implications of this new scenario, resolved to transfer the Hunter Battalions from Thessaloniki to Istanbul as a precautionary measure. Simultaneously, the competition between academy-trained and non-academy-trained officers within the army, the targeted killings of certain opposition journalists, and the inflammatory actions and discourse emanating from emerging opposition centers surrounding the İttihâd-ı Muhammedî Society, established by Derviş Vahdetî, and its associated publication, the Volkan newspaper, intensified tensions and culminated in the events referred to as the 31 March Incident. During this time, the members of the Hunter Battalions, located in Taşkışla, incarcerated their officers and conducted a display of power at Sultanahmet. The resignation of Grand Vizier Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha, the disorder prevailing in the capital, political assassinations, and assertions regarding the peril faced by the Constitutional Order and the capital culminated in the arrival of the Hareket Ordusu (Movement Army) from Thessaloniki on April 24, which subsequently proclaimed martial law. This sequence of events fostered an environment of disorder in the Ottoman capital. For the Unionists, the origins of the adverse events were unambiguous; all indications implicated the thirty-three-year rule of the Sultan, culminating in the deposition of Sultan Abdülhamid II on April 27, 1909, and the subsequent accession of his brother, Mehmed V Reşad, to the throne (reigned 1909-1918).

The era of Abdülhamid II is widely regarded as the most contentious period in Ottoman historiography. At the outset of his thirty-three-year reign, Sultan Abdülhamid II abolished the Constitution and the Chamber of Deputies, which had diminished his absolute authority, and instituted a new political-administrative framework centered on his own person. At first, the Sultan acquiesced to bureaucratic oversight with reluctance; however, his governance was markedly autocratic, indicating a misalignment between his conception of sovereignty and the "constitutional monarch" ideal advocated by the Tanzimat bureaucrats. It is undeniable that Abdülhamid exhibited paranoid tendencies; contemporary sources occasionally



characterized him as a "manifestation of delusion." Nevertheless, the enigmatic demise of one predecessor and the psychological distress of another, attributable to the heightened political climate and oversight, demonstrated that his apprehensions were not solely derived from fantasy or illusion. Following the consolidation of his authority in the early 1890s, Abdülhamid progressively marginalized the impact of the Bab-ı Âli (the imperial bureaucracy) by means of the commissions and devoted personnel he established at Yıldız Palace. In this newly established framework, referred to as the 'Yıldız System', which positioned the sovereign monarch at its core, notions such as human rights, consultation, and the assembly—prominently praised during the Constitutional Era—were supplanted by allegiance to the state, patriotism, dedication to the Sultan, and unequivocal obedience as its foundational principles. His newly implemented administrative system was definitive, functional, realistic, and adaptable, adjusting according to the prevailing conditions. In this framework, the formerly ceremonial function of the Mâbeyn-i Hümâyûn (the Imperial Secretariat) assumed considerable importance. Another crucial component of Abdülhamid II's robust state was intelligence; the newly established internal security and intelligence network, reliant on espionage and informants, was supervised by Fehim Pasha and Serhafiye Ahmed Celaleddin Pasha. This system rapidly quelled dissent. In conjunction with this, rigorous censorship was enforced, suppressing any critique that could emerge from the press and media.

Sultan Hamid would instruct that the files be presented for review to state officials whom he trusted for their fidelity and knowledge, subsequently leveraging their perspectives. He abstained from involvement in legal and judicial affairs; in opposition to prevailing perceptions, he preserved a separation from violence and favored incarceration over capital punishment in severe criminal cases. He maintained control over his adversaries by appointing and incentivizing them to public offices, preferably under supervision within the capital. In academic discourse, censorship and the clandestine police force are predominantly linked to Abdülhamid II; however, such practices predate his rule. For example, censorship was formalized through legislation enacted in 1857, 1864, and 1867, and was rigorously implemented during the reign of Sultan Abdülaziz, especially targeting the New Ottomans who utilized the press to express their opposition to the government. Abdülhamid II formalized the extant censorship, expanded its parameters, and converted it into a significantly more stringent system of control.



The governance strategy employed by Sultan Abdülhamid was characterized by its flexibility and pragmatism. The marked volatility in both domestic and international politics, coupled with the ever-evolving conditions and equilibria, rendered such a political position unavoidable. His apparently inconsistent and contradictory decisions and behaviors become coherent when assessed within this framework. His decision to utilize the Prussia card in opposition to the established colonialism of England and France represents a preference mandated by the circumstances. Specifically regarding pivotal foreign policy matters, he frequently delegated issues to commissions, ostensibly seeking to delay decision-making. He firmly believed that balance politics represented the most efficacious means to prevent an empire, diminished from its past prominence and fatigued, from engaging in conflict; consequently, he ardently advocated for the resolution of international matters through negotiation and utilized diplomatic avenues to mitigate external pressures and interventions whenever feasible. Recognizing that the Ottoman identity, envisioned by the Tanzimat as a unifying element, could not be successfully constructed, he prioritized Pan-Islamism (İttihâd-ı İslam) and the institution of the caliphate as the second stage of the Three Policies prevalent during that period. Subsequent to the Berlin Congress, the foundation for the Armenian Question and the Palestine Issue was established during his tenure, triumph by external support, intervention, and protection. During a period characterized by the rapid decline of the Ottoman Empire, Abdülhamid II endeavored to preserve the integrity of the state by constructing a distinctive realm for himself. In this domain, he sought solace from the somber ambiance of Yıldız Palace by engaging in activities such as theater, Western music, photography, painting, carpentry, and an avid interest in detective literature.

Regarding Sultan Hamid's adversaries, the Committee of Union and Progress (İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti) is of considerable significance as the entity responsible for terminating the reign of Abdülhamid II and developing the cadres that subsequently founded the Turkish Republic. It is challenging to discuss the depth of political and social thought among the factions encompassed by the Committee. Nevertheless, the ideas upon which the opposition reached consensus were predominantly focused on the themes of "national identity" and "the future of the nation." In addition to these, they fervently embraced notions such as liberty, equality, fraternity, unity, and progress—principles that had constituted the core of the revolutionaries' ideology since the French Revolution. When they used the term "homeland," they were referring to the extensive geographical area occupied by



the diverse religious and ethnic groups that comprised Ottoman society. Initially, a blend of idealism and excessive romanticism fostered the conviction that, within the framework of "Ottomanism," all components of the empire could collectively construct a superior future, transforming what had previously been regarded as a remote aspiration into a viable reality. Consequently, they fervently supported constitutional-parliamentary systems, which they perceived as safeguarding Ottomanism, the Constitution (Kanun-ı Esasî), liberty, consultation, and constitutionalism.

In the resistance mounted by the Young Turks organized within the framework of the Committee of Union and Progress (İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti), there was typically no antagonism toward the institution of the sultanate itself; rather, their consensus focused on the deposition of Sultan Abdülhamid II, whom they deemed a despotic ruler, and the subsequent re-establishment of the Constitution (Meşrutiyet). The Committee of Union and Progress, instrumental in facilitating the transition from the Ottoman Empire to the Republic and exerting considerable influence over the cadre that would govern the Turkish Republic, significantly shaped the dynamics between the military and the civilian domains, as well as administrative discourse. Subsequent to the proclamation of the Second Constitution, as the Ittihadists incrementally assumed control of authority, the protracted political uncertainties were resolved, and the trajectory of the Empire's reform (teceddüt) and modernization became unequivocally defined. In this process, the Ittihadists also embraced Turkish nationalism, signifying the culmination of the "Three Styles of Politics" (Üç Tarz-ı Siyaset) as the proposed solution for the Empire's redemption. In this determination, the profound sense of isolation engendered by the exodus of Muslim groups, such as Albanians and Arabs, from the disintegrating Empire should not be disregarded.

During the nine-year reign of Sultan Mehmed V Reşad, who assumed the throne at the age of sixty-five, ten cabinet shuffles took place, and compounded by the political deficiencies of the Ittihadists, significant crises were rendered inevitable. As these adverse developments transpired within the nation, the Great Powers (Düvel-i Muazzama) remained engrossed in their individual agendas and unresolved matters pertaining to the Eastern Question. As previously noted, following the promulgation of the Second Constitution, Austria annexed Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria proclaimed its independence, and Crete was transferred to Greece. The Ittihadists' determination, rendered on 3 July 1910, to delineate the affiliation of churches and schools based on population proportions, significantly contributed to

the mitigation of the persistent discord among Balkan states and enhanced collaboration with the Ottoman Empire. During this era, as indications of disintegration became apparent, the Italo-Turkish War (1911), the seizure of the Aegean Islands, and the subsequent outbreak of the Balkan Wars a year later significantly exacerbated the Empire's erosion of territory and authority. Serving as a manifestation of the escalating political crisis, the Bab-ı Ali Raid (1913) and the subsequent assassination of former Grand Vizier Mahmud Şevket Pasha in the same year, along with the employment of extraordinary courts to prosecute individuals suspected of eliminating the opposition, culminating in exiles and executions, further eroded the legitimacy of political institutions. The expectations that emerged following the retaking of Edirne during the Balkan War additionally reinforced the military faction of the Ittihadists. With the designation of Enver Pasha as Minister of War and Cemal Pasha as Minister of the Navy in 1914, there ceased to be any impediment to Talat Bey (Pasha), the Minister of the Interior, exercising complete authority within the government. Under the direction of the Ittihadist Triumvirate and with the safeguard provided by Germany, the Ottoman Empire engaged in World War I (1914-18), signifying the onset of the Empire's disintegration.

The Armistice of Mudros (30 October 1918) and the subsequent occupation of the Ottoman capital and the nation by the Allied Powers, culminating in the Treaty of Sèvres (10 August 1920), precipitated the development of patriotic resistance movements in Anatolia, most notably the Kuvâ-yi Milliye movement. In reaction to these detrimental actions, Sultan Mehmed VI Vahdettin, perceiving a danger to his life and the empire's future, departed from the nation on 17 November 1922. In the aftermath of the War of Independence, the termination of the Sultanate (1 November 1922) and the proclamation of the Republic (29 October 1923) signified the conclusion of the Ottoman Empire. The six-century-old historical and cultural legacy, as well as socio-economic frameworks and institutions, were transmitted to the successor of the Ottoman heritage, the Republic of Turkey.

A Concise Evaluation of the Ottomans

The Ottoman Empire constituted a Turkish state governed by a singular dynasty for more than six centuries. Their political and military successes, along with effective and judicious administrative, legal, social, and cultural policies, witnessed an extended era of peace referred to as Pax Ottomana. During this period, they



effectively administered a variety of ethnic and religious groups over several centuries. This accomplishment cannot be attributed exclusively to the nomadic vigor and communal cohesion of their adherents. The Ottomans, enriched by the cultural and civilizational heritage of a region influenced by Turkish, Mongol, Indian, Persian, Roman, Byzantine, and Arab traditions, utilized the values generated by the Old World centered around the Mediterranean. They enhanced their civilization by integrating components from the Iranian-Turanian legacy, Turkish-Islamic experiences, *Oghuz traditions* (töre), *Alpine culture,* and a *judicious* pragmatism derived from the ancient world, thereby evolving these elements into a novel and more advanced civilizational structure over a period of six centuries.

The Ottomans, characterized as a patrimonial-agricultural empire, revered their traditional Eastern administrative ethos centered on the kānūn-ı kadîm (ancient law) and nizām-ı ālem (order of the world). This was encapsulated in a framework termed the dāʾira-i adliyye (cycle of justice), which reflected an interrelated system of administrative and social processes via sequential life responses. In the face of diverse religions and cultures, they upheld the principle of justice, employing a policy of istimālet (accommodation) that inherently promoted reconciliation and coexistence. This method exhibited rhetorical constructiveness and political conciliation. In essence, they effectively employed the elements of soft power focused on justice, thereby securing the trust and agreement of "the other."

The Ottoman Empire, which sustained its competitiveness in administrative-bureaucratic capabilities and military strength for an extended period, emerged as one of the most enduring political entities, owing to its pragmatic strategy of optimizing the use of local resources, including human capital, by fostering reconciliation with local power centers, exhibiting religious-cultural flexibility that increased the vitality of rural areas, and establishing a justice-oriented functional bureaucratic system. Inevitably, the Empire encountered numerous challenges during this process; however, instead of ignoring these issues, it diligently performed damage assessments, and the political, advisory, and reformist literature exemplifies this persistent endeavor and inquiry. When required, political-military alliances, institutional transformations, and the transference of technology, especially firearms, along with the utilization of foreign experts (exemplified by the early Tâife-i Efrenciyân) as catalytic agents, were actively sought to enhance these processes. Notwithstanding minor and excessively cautious responses, the state's political intellect consistently succeeded in identifying the appropriate course. It is crucial to recognize

that, within the framework of conservatism, the proportion of individuals who contested the system grounded in tradition and belief was markedly minor compared to those who, motivated by anxieties regarding the erosion of their administrative roles and economic interests, engaged in provoking conservative factions and leveraging religious ideas.

From its inception, the Ottoman Empire's tolerant, flexible, eclectic, practical, and pragmatic memory—influenced by residing "on the edge" and coexisting with "the other"—has consistently informed its capacity to adjust to changing circumstances and promote coexistence. In this regard, it may be asserted that the Ottomans constituted the foundational forces that promoted interactions among ancient civilizations and perpetually establishing pathways for mutual cultural engagement. As a foundational requirement for statehood and subsequent imperial status, they consistently endorsed scholars, intellectuals, artists, and cultural institutions, which served as the vehicles and repositories of ancient human experience. They significantly enhanced the domains of science, culture, and art by transferring the collective knowledge acquired from the newly annexed regions to the imperial capital. Through the establishment of institutions and libraries, they transmitted this collective memory to subsequent generations. Through educational institutions, observatories, and hospitals, they generated notable figures in the domains of basic sciences, medicine, astronomy, politics, ethics, metaphysics, logic, and philosophy until the late 18th century, adhering to the frameworks of the Meşşâî, İşrâkî, Kelâmî, and Ekberî schools of thought.

The extensive territory they governed, the heterogeneity of human resources, and the administrative, political, and social policies that promoted intercultural exchange empowered the Ottomans to develop novel syntheses in the domains of culture and art. The arts and crafts associated with architecture, literature, music, performing arts, painting, calligraphy, miniature, découpage, marbling, illumination, jewelry, ceramics, bookbinding, woodwork, embroidery, and weaving exemplify the integration of skills and knowledge from an extensive geographic area. Ottoman architects, commencing with the integration of Seljuk and Byzantine traditions, manifested significant ingenuity through the figure of Sinan bin Abdülmennan, culminating in the advancement of an innovative, highly aesthetic, and functional architectural framework across official, religious, and civic environments. Through this repertoire, they constructed the remarkable edifices of an



urban civilization that genuinely epitomized the essence of the concepts "umran" (prosperity) and "temeddün" (civilization).

Turkish Classical Literature, particularly Divan poetry, achieved considerable prominence during the Ottoman era, undergoing such refinement that it may be characterized as "the magic of the permissible" and yielding outstanding literary contributions. The quantity of poets, calligraphers, and musicians (lyricists, composers, and instrumentalists) within the sultanate is considerable. Classical Turkish music, which evolved into two significant branches within religious and secular domains, generated prominent figures, and the theoretical dimensions of this art received considerable attention. The accumulation and repertoire within the domain of "instrument and word" were documented via journals and literary cycles. The contributions of non-Muslim Ottoman subjects in the domains of music theory, repertoire, notation, and performance are also significant. It is essential to underscore that during the Tanzimat era, as the empire transitioned from the classical to the modern framework, this cultural accumulation experienced considerable transformations in genre, content, and form across architecture, performing arts, music, painting, and literature.

The Ottomans, committed to establishing a society where differences were regarded as an asset rather than a detriment, demonstrated a multi-religious and multi-ethnic framework that extended from administrative and military positions to the inhabitants of the harem, and from cultural and artistic domains to the service industry—an arrangement rarely observed. Instead of emphasizing the conventional, the Ottomans prioritized the development of skilled human capital via the devshirme system, thereby enabling the assertion that they exhibited a greater tendency towards meritocracy than aristocracy. Ottoman law, influenced by the Turkish-Mongol state tradition and Islamic jurisprudence, was founded on a dual framework of religious (Shari'a) and customary (kanun) principles. In regions where the legal tenets of Shari'a, commonly referred to as the "sacred law," and existing administrative practices were inadequate, the Ottoman legal system evolved by integrating customary law in the initial phase and Western legal frameworks in the modern era to fulfill contemporary requirements. The impetus for these adaptations was not solely attributed to distinct civilizations or Westernization; instead, it stemmed from the imperative to incorporate modern legal practices in response to heightened international relations within administrative, commercial, and municipal domains. The initial legislation enacted during the Tanzimat era,

the Commercial Code, along with the formation of the first court based on Western models, the Commercial Court, are of considerable importance in this context. Civil law, particularly concerning family and inheritance matters, was already under the purview of Shari'a Courts in the Ottoman Empire. Nevertheless, a significant disparity existed in the treatment of cases involving Ottoman subjects and foreigners within the Nizamiye Courts, particularly concerning the foundational principles and methods of adjudication. To mitigate this, the Mecelle (1868-1876) and subsequently the Family Law Regulations (1917) were established, thereby ensuring the continued operation of civil law within the parameters of religious belief and cultural tradition.

The representation of six centuries within a millennium-long Turkish history in Anatolia and nearly half of a fourteen-hundred-year-old Islamic history by the Ottomans is inextricably linked to their adaptability to the evolving demands of the era. The Ottomans, who historically administered the classical civilization centers of antiquity, must be acknowledged in order to comprehend and examine human history comprehensively. Regarding the extensive territories they formerly governed, the historical narrative of not only their allies and adversaries but also numerous new states formed within their ex-dominions remains incomplete without the inclusion of the Ottoman Empire. The prevailing Anglo-American paradigm in contemporary historiography, which traverses the realms of Ancient Greece, Rome, and the Christian Middle Ages to culminate in modernity, and presently proclaims "the end of history," warrants revision. In this context, Ottoman historiography should be emancipated from myth-infused notions, purged of ideological influences, and instead fostered by comparative historical analyses conducted within cultural, social, and economic frameworks, adhering to modern methodological standards, thereby transcending traditional narratives centered on the palace, the harem, and military successes.

In conclusion, we may inquire: What factors contributed to the deterioration of this once-efficient system, which functioned effectively until the early modern period, rendering it dysfunctional? Additionally, what were the primary causes of the decline in Ottoman power from the late 16th century onward, culminating in their eventual collapse in the 20th century? Irrespective of their initial construction, political and social systems commence to stagnate and subsequently regress when they forfeit their flexibility and capacity to accommodate the demands dictated by the zeitgeist. Analogously to how an individual walking is overtaken by



someone running, the quicker runner inherently traverses a greater distance compared to the slower one. The Ottomans founded one of the most enduring political entities in global history; however, they were not isolated nor devoid of competition. If you are not a primary contributor to the formation of global history through phenomena such as the New Science (Nova Scientia), the Reformation, the Renaissance, the Age of Exploration, Colonialism, the Scientific Revolution, the Military Revolution, the Enlightenment, the Industrial Revolution, and the French Revolution—if you do not influence the foundational elements of the modern world—then it is unavoidable that you will be impacted by the challenges arising from these developments.

As if this were inadequate, the established coalition composed of individuals vehemently against change and transformation, reliant on a Janissary mentality, frequently managed to induce delays and required the monitoring of the actions of those progressing forward. Protracted and difficult multi-front conflicts, sustained complacency in adhering to international political equilibria and assimilation into contemporary diplomacy, the unavoidable sequence of setbacks due to diminished competitiveness in firearms technology, delays in the transformation of information into technology, and the adaptation of educational institutions to this process, a notable absence of private property, capital accumulation, and an entrepreneurial class, the exaltation of a modest existence shaped by the statist economic model based on belief and tradition rather than the dynamism produced by a competitive liberal economy, the inclination towards market abundance and affordable goods via a provisionist (subsistence) approach alongside export prohibitions contrary to mercantilism, the prioritization of resignation, contentment, and a subsistence economy over Protestant culture and the prosperity and comfort generated by capitalism, the aversion to financial instruments and institutions such as credit, bonds, banking, banks, and the stock market rooted in faith and tradition, the traditional administrative-economic framework that rendered the existence of a capitalist and entrepreneurial class infeasible, the state-imposed industrialization, the importation of modern means of production, and the outdated and non-competitive production methods that culminated in substantial trade deficits during the final period, all ultimately led to a political structure ensnared in a detrimental cycle of foreign debt and default, eventually resulting in a moratorium, followed by the opening of the nation's finances to foreign control and oversight through the establishment of the Public Debt Administration (Düyûn-ı Umûmiyye). It was unavoidable that such a political framework would encounter significant crises and strains.

In this context, the erosion of the military domain, which perpetually reduced Ottoman territory, coupled with the challenges posed by the return or migration to Anatolia, population increase, individualism, and the rise of novel notions such as public opinion, led to a disruption in the conventional understanding of authority. The societal standing of women, the progress in transportation and communication that diminished the perceived size of the world, and the emerging needs stemming from this contemporary integrated perspective precipitated a civilizational crisis, characterized by the inherent tension between traditional knowledge and the appeal of innovation, as articulated by Sadullah Pasha. The autocratic responses demonstrated by the regime to intellectual dissent and emerging ideologies exacerbated the reverberations, thereby further expanding the divide between the Ottomans and the developed nations of the modern era. Finally, it is crucial to acknowledge that during the 20th century, the legitimacy of dynasties and monarchies was subject to considerable scrutiny, as empires began to transition into nation-states, a phenomenon that invariably led to rebellions, separations, contractions, and fragmentation—with the Ottomans being no exception to this trend.

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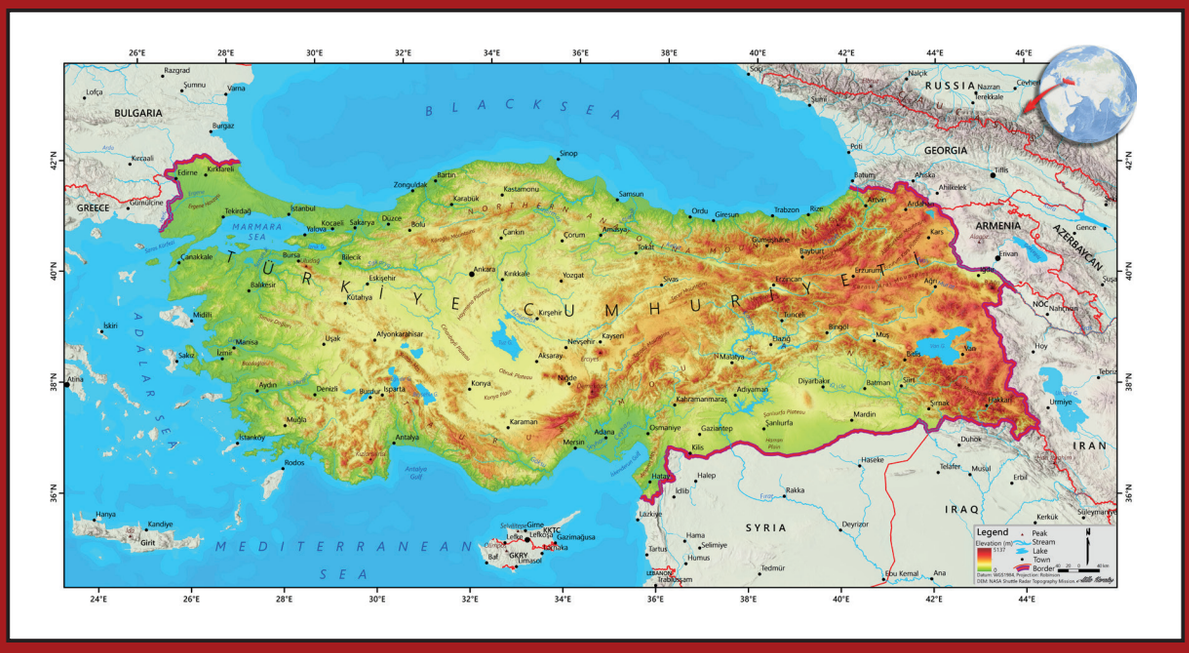
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The Republic Of Türkiye



Source: Atilla Karataş Collection



THE REPUBLIC OF TÜRKIYE

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Subsequent to the ratification of the Armistice of Mudros on October 30, 1918, which signified the Ottoman Empire's defeat in World War I, the progressive occupation of its territories resulted in the formation of indigenous resistance movements. Approximately 400 Associations for the Defense of National Rights (Müdafaa-i Hukuk Cemiyetleri) were established throughout Anatolia and Thrace, in addition to over thirty congresses, thereby constituting the societal basis of the National Struggle. The arrival of Mustafa Kemal Pasha in Anatolia, endowed with broad authorities as the Inspector of the Ninth Army, introduced a novel dimension to the Defense of Rights movement. From this juncture forward, the resistance movement successfully coalesced under a unified leadership and organizational framework. These organizations, operating in Anatolia and Thrace, articulated requests for general elections, as mandated by the constitution, thereby exerting pressure on the government in Istanbul. In reaction, the recently established cabinet under Ali Rıza Pasha dispatched Minister of the Interior Salih Pasha along with a delegation to Amasya to engage in negotiations with the Representative Committee headed by Mustafa Kemal Pasha. These discussions culminated in an agreement to conduct general elections. The recently established Ottoman Chamber of Deputies subsequently endorsed

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the National Pact (Misak-ı Milli), which outlined the definitive territorial boundaries within which the Ottoman State could exist. This proclamation elicited a vehement response from the Allied Powers, culminating in the formal occupation of Istanbul on March 16, 1920. The Ottoman Parliament building was subjected to a raid, resulting in the apprehension of several of its members. In response to the occupation, the Chamber of Deputies announced its inability to continue functioning and consequently suspended its operations. On March 17, 1920, Mustafa Kemal Pasha, in his capacity as the leader of the Representative Committee, proclaimed that the new parliament would assemble in Ankara. Celaleddin Arif Bey, the Speaker of the Ottoman Chamber of Deputies, supported this initiative. Subsequent to national elections, the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye was inaugurated in Ankara on April 23, 1920.

Due to its establishment and emancipatory nature, the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye (GNAT) emerged as a representation of the nation's unity and integrity, as well as the sovereignty and independence of its populace in opposition to occupation. The ultimate military triumph of the National Struggle was achieved through the Great Offensive (Büyük Taarruz) on August 30, 1922, significantly elevating the prestige of the GNAT. Subsequent to this victory, the Assembly dismantled the Ottoman Sultanate in Istanbul, which had sought to participate in political power-sharing post-war, via a landmark resolution enacted on November 1, 1922. Having established both military and political authority within the nation, the GNAT government extended its success into the sphere of international diplomacy. By means of the Treaty of Lausanne (July 24, 1923), the recognition of an independent and sovereign Turkish state was formally endorsed by the international community. In the ensuing period, concurrent with endeavors to establish the new national state and its institutions, Türkiye commenced to situate itself within the global system at both regional and international tiers, adhering to its foundational foreign policy principle summarized in the adage "Peace at Home, Peace in the World."

The Establishment of the National State (1923-1938)

During the parliamentary session conducted on the evening of Monday, October 29, 1923, the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye (GNAT) officially declared that the Turkish State would adopt a republican form of government. Gazi Mustafa Kemal Pasha was unanimously elected as the inaugural President by 158 members of parliament. The declaration of the Republic was conveyed to all regions of the nation via telegraph and formally proclaimed with 101 cannon salutes. The subsequent



day saw İsmet (İnönü) Pasha assume the position of the inaugural Prime Minister of the Republic of Türkiye. Post-proclamation of the Republic, a sequence of swift reforms was commenced, focusing on political, legal, and social domains. The psychological emancipation of the nation from a perception of inferiority—especially evident during the previous century in relation to Western civilization—was bolstered by military and diplomatic triumphs. Consequently, this enhanced the collective resolve to attain the standards of modern civilization in order to prevent future regression. In the twentieth century, an era characterized by the shift from empires to nation-states and from absolute and constitutional monarchies to democratic regimes, the emerging Turkish State similarly commenced a journey of transformation. This transition involved the progressive adoption of contemporary legal principles and institutional norms, consequently influencing both state structures and societal life within a modernist framework.

Political and Legal Reforms

The fundamental principles that underpinned the structure and philosophical foundations of the newly formed state—subsequently referred to as the Principles of Atatürk—commenced to materialize as early as the period of the National Struggle. Established and led by Mustafa Kemal Pasha as its inaugural president, the Republican People's Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Fırkası, CHF) emerged as the predominant influence in Turkish politics throughout twenty-seven years of single-party governance. As a result, these essential principles were initially explicitly outlined in the statutes of the party. In its 1927 statute, the party defined itself as republican, populist, and nationalist.[1] By the time of its enactment in 1931, the primary characteristics—now expanded to six—were delineated under the designation of the Principles of Kemalism, each accompanied by a justification. Republicanism was characterized as the governmental system that most effectively embodies and enacts national sovereignty; Nationalism was delineated as the objective of engaging with all civilized nations on equitable terms while maintaining the unique characteristics and independent identity of the Turkish nation; Populism was defined by the fulfillment of reciprocal obligations between the state and its citizens, ensuring the proper exercise of both will and sovereignty; Statism was described as the active involvement of the state, especially in the economic sphere, to promote national welfare and prosperity; secularism was characterized by the necessity for all state laws and regulations to align with the principles and frameworks of contemporary civilization, reflect-

1 *Cumhuriyet Halk Fırkası Nizamnamesi*, 1927, p.3.

ing global needs; and Reformism (Revolutionism) was defined as the preservation and enhancement of the principles derived from the nation's revolutionary sacrifices.[2] With the constitutional amendment enacted on February 5, 1937, the six principles—"The Turkish State is Republican, Nationalist, Populist, Statist, Secular, and Reformist"—were officially integrated into the Constitution.[3]

In accordance with these essential principles, the recently established Republic implemented a range of foundational reforms, commencing with the enactment on March 3, 1924, of the Law on the Abolition of the Caliphate and the Expulsion of Members of the Ottoman Dynasty from the Republic of Türkiye.[4] On the same day, two additional laws were enacted: one abrogating the Ministry of Sharia and Foundations, premised on the assertion that "in the Republic of Türkiye, legislative and executive power over legal matters governing interpersonal relations resides with the Grand National Assembly and the government it establishes." To supervise issues pertaining exclusively to faith and worship derived from the explicit principles of Islam, and to administer religious institutions, a Directorate of Religious Affairs shall be established in the capital of the Republic"[5] and with the implementation of the *Law on the Unification of Education* to integrate and modernize the educational system.[6] Following this, on April 8, 1924, the Sharia Courts were abolished. On September 2, 1925, religious institutions such as tekkes, zaviyes, and türbes were shut down.[7] On November 25, 1925, the Hat Regulation Law was enacted, requiring the implementation of Western-style headwear. On April 5, 1928, the Republican People's Party formally embraced secularism (*laiklik*) as a fundamental principle.[8] Merely five days thereafter, on April 10, Article 2 of the Constitution was modified to eliminate the provision stating that "The religion of the State of Türkiye is Islam."

2 *CHF Nizamnamesi ve Programı*, TBMM Printing Press, Ankara 1931, p.31.

3 https://www.anayasa.gov.tr/tr/mevzuat/onceki-anayasalar/1924-anayasasi/

4 https://www5.tbmm.gov.tr/tutanaklar/KANUNLAR_KARARLAR/kanuntbmmc00200431.pdf; https://ataturkansiklopedisi.gov.tr/bilgi/halifeligin-kaldirilmasi-3-mart-1924

5 https://ataturkansiklopedisi.gov.tr/bilgi/seriye-ve-evkaf-vekaleti

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8 M. Akif Kireçci, Can Eyüp Çekiç, "1927 Seçimleri ve Sonuçları: Tek Partili Rejimin Temelleri", *100. Yılında TBMM,* C.1, TBMM Printing House, Ankara 2020, p.170.



The first constitution of the Republic of Türkiye, which was in force for thirty-six years, came into force on April 20, 1924.[9] Fundamental rights and freedoms were consolidated under the title "Public Rights of the Turks." In 1926, considerable legal reforms were implemented through the incorporation of civil law from Switzerland, criminal law from Italy, and commercial law from Germany. With the implementation of the Turkish Civil Code, which consists of 937 articles and was enacted on February 17, 1926, the prerogatives formerly conferred upon men in legal, familial, and social contexts were eliminated.[10] Women, who commenced their political prominence with the right to vote in municipal elections on April 30, 1930, were later afforded the right to vote and be candidates in village head (muhtar) elections on October 26, 1933, and to vote and be elected as parliamentary representatives on December 5, 1934. Subsequently, additional legal developments transpired: on March 1, the Turkish Penal Code was implemented; on March 3, the Judges Act was enacted; and on April 19, the Cabotage Act was sanctioned, thereby reserving all maritime activities within Turkish territorial waters solely for Turkish citizens.[11]

One of the principal objectives of the new Republic, consistent with its foundational principle of attaining the standards of modern civilization, was to enhance the educational attainment of the populace. In furtherance of this objective, the Council of Ministers promulgated a resolution on May 28, 1928, delineating the framework for the inauguration of the Millet Mektepleri (Nation's Schools). Following the resolution that came into force on November 1, 1928, to substitute the Arabic script with the Latin alphabet,[12] The decree pertaining to the *Millet Mektepleri* was officially implemented on November 24, 1928. According to the relevant regulation, all Turkish citizens aged 16 to 45 were obligated to participate in instruction at these institutions, irrespective of their existing literacy skills. The educational institutions commenced their operations on January 1, 1929.[13]

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9 *TBMM Zabıt Ceridesi*, D. II, C.VII, 9 Mart 1340/1924, p.213; Bülent Tanör, *Osmanlı-Türk Anayasal Gelişmeleri,* Yapı Kredi Publications, Istanbul 1998, p.311; Cem Eroğul, *Anatüzeye Giriş*, İmaj Publications, Ankara 1997, p.217.

10 For detailed information see Hıfzı Veldet Velidedeoğlu, *Türk Medeni Hukuku*, Sermet Printing Press, Istanbul 1968.

11 https://www.mevzuat.gov.tr/mevzuatmetin/1.3.815.pdf

12 https://www5.tbmm.gov.tr/tutanaklar/KANUNLAR_KARARLAR/ kanuntbmmc00701353.pdf

13 *Resmî Gazete*, 24 Teşrinisani 1928. https://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/arsiv/1048T.pdf

The Political Developments of the Period

In compliance with the terms of the Treaty of Lausanne, executed on July 24, 1923, a proclamation of general amnesty was mandated. Nevertheless, the Grand National Assembly and the government enacted the General Amnesty Law on April 16, 1924, which excluded individuals who had participated in acts of treason and whose ongoing presence in the nation following the victory would jeopardize national peace. According to this protocol, 150 individuals were classified as ineligible for amnesty. Individuals residing in Türkiye were mandated to be expelled, while those already located abroad were to be prohibited from entering the country.[14]

The year 1924 also signified the inaugural experience of multi-party political engagement in the newly established state. On November 10, 1924, the term "Republican" was incorporated into the designation of the nation's only political organization, the People's Party. In the interim, discrepancies in viewpoints began to surface between the prominent cadre of the National Struggle and Mustafa Kemal Pasha regarding the radical versus moderate progression of change and transformation.[15] Prominent individuals involved in the National Struggle who withdrew from the People's Party founded the Progressive Republican Party (Terakkiperver Cumhuriyet Fırkası, TCF) on November 17, 1924. General Kazım Karabekir Pasha was appointed as the party chairman, with Rauf (Orbay) Bey serving as vice-chairman and Ali Fuat (Cebesoy) Pasha as secretary-general. Among the party's prominent

[14] https://ataturkansiklopedisi.gov.tr/bilgi/yuzellilikler/; *Son Posta,* 30 Haziran 1938; Emin Karaca, *150'likler,* Altın Kitaplar, Istanbul 2004; Şaduman Halıcı, *Yüzellilik Gazeteciler*, Cumhuriyet Kitap, Istanbul 2021. This list included Sultan Vahdettin and his entourage, the signatories of the Treaty of Sèvres, Kuva-yi İnzibatiye, some prominent civil and military officials, police officers, Circassian Ethem and his men, journalists and some civilians. Some famous names at the top of the list were as follows: Sultan Vahdettin, Sheikhulislam Mustafa Sabri, Chief of the Council of State Rıza Tevfik, Chief of the Divan War Nemrut Mustafa, Circassian Ethem and his brothers Tevfik and Reşid, Kuşçubaşı Eşref, Mevlanzâde Rıfat, owner of the newspaper Serbesti, Sait Molla, owner of the Turkish newspaper Istanbul, Refii Cevad, owner of the newspaper Alemdar, Refik Halit, owner of the newspaper Aydede. 11 years later, with the Amnesty Law adopted by the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye on 29 June 1938, the bans on entering the country were lifted. However, it was decided that they would not be entitled to a pension and that they would not be allowed to serve in public service for eight years from the effective date of the law. With the enactment of the law, 27 people returned to the country immediately and 24 people returned between 1939 and 1945. 39 people never returned and 60 people had died in 1938 when the law was passed.

[15] Mahmut Goloğlu, *Devrimler ve Tepkileri 1924-1930*, Başnur Printing Press, Ankara 1972, p.63.



deputies were Muhtar, deputy of Trabzon was represented by Rüştü Pasha, a deputy from Erzurum; Faik, a deputy from Ordu; and Dr. Adnan (Adıvar) Bey.[16] The party endorsed a progressive agenda, highlighting the promotion of civil liberties, the honor of religious convictions, and the imperative for the President of the Republic to maintain impartiality.[17]

Roughly three months after the formation of the Progressive Republican Party (TCF), the Sheikh Said Rebellion commenced on February 13, 1925. Subsequent to the resignation of the Fethi Bey government, İsmet Pasha assumed the role of Prime Minister on March 3, 1925, and on March 4, the government enacted the Law on the Maintenance of Order (Takrir-i Sükûn Kanunu), which conferred extensive powers and was intended to be in force for a duration of four years.[18] The legislation mandated the formation of Independence Courts in Ankara and Diyarbakır while instituting extensive censorship of the press. On March 24, hostilities directed at the insurgents were initiated. Sheikh Said, along with his adherents, was apprehended on April 15. Forty-six persons, including Sheikh Said, who received death sentences, were executed on June 29.[19] Certain insurgents were suspected of having ties to the TCF, and the party faced accusations of manipulating religious sentiments for political gain, thereby implicating it in the rebellion. As a result, on May 25, 1925, the TCF branches located in the regions engaged in rebellion were shut down, and on June 3, a resolution was adopted to fully dissolve the party. Consequently, the initial experiment with multi-party political engagement persisted for only six and a half months and concluded unsuccessfully.[20]

Nearly a year subsequently, on June 14, 1926, an assassination plot aimed at President Mustafa Kemal Pasha was discovered in İzmir. On June 15, the conspirators were taken into custody. After a trial conducted in İzmir, thirteen individuals—predominantly former members of the Committee of Union and Progress (İttihat ve

16 Tarık Zafer Tunaya, *Türkiye'de Siyasi Partiler (1859-1952)*, Arba Publications, Istanbul 1995, p.606-622; Erik Jan Zürcher, *Terakkiperver Cumhuriyet Fırkası,* trans. G. Ç. Güven, Bağlam Publications, Istanbul 1992, p.75-76.

17 Ali Fuat Cebesoy, *Siyasi Hatıralar,* II. Kısım, Istanbul 1960, p.216; İsmet İnönü, *Hatıralar*, C.2, Bilgi Publishers, Istanbul 1987, p.198.

18 *TBMM Zabıt Ceridesi,* Devre: II, C.15, p.149.

19 https://ataturkansiklopedisi.gov.tr/bilgi/seyh-sait-ayaklanmasi; Ergün Aybars, *İstiklâl Mahkemeleri*, Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı Publishers, Ankara 1982, p.180-181.

20 *Resmî Gazete,* 6 Haziran 1925. https://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/arsiv/109.pdf. Reşat Hallı, *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nde Ayaklanmalar (1924-1938),* T.C. Genelkurmay Başkanlığı Harp Tarihi Dairesi Resmî Publications, Ankara 1972.

Terakki)—were executed. Following trials in Ankara, four former Unionists were executed on August 26, 1926, in relation to the assassination plot, with a further conspirator subsequently captured and executed in Ankara on August 31.[21] This situation came to be known in Turkish political history as the purge of the Unionists.

On June 26, 1927, the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye (TBMM) resolved to conduct general elections. Four days subsequently, President Mustafa Kemal, İsmet (İnönü), and Kazım (Özalp) Pashas concluded their military service. Subsequent to the parliamentary elections conducted on September 2, all candidates representing the Republican People's Party (CHF) were elected as deputies in 23 electoral districts, including Ankara and Istanbul. On October 15, at the CHF's second significant congress, President Mustafa Kemal Pasha commenced the delivery of the Nutuk (The Address). The completion of the Nutuk reading spanned six days, with an average duration of six hours daily. On October 22, during revisions to the bylaws of the CHF, it was resolved under the rubric "General Principles" that the initial six articles—which delineate the party's republican, nationalist, and populist nature; the perpetual preservation of the republic; the separation of state and national matters from religious affairs; the equality of all individuals; the advancement of the Turkish language and culture; and the designation of Mustafa Kemal Pasha as the party's founder and leader, are inviolable under any circumstances. Consequently, the tradition of an irrevocable general chairmanship was instituted.[22]

By the late 1920s, discontent stemming from economic and social causes had increased across the country, leading to growing discontent with the Republican People's Party (CHF) government.[23] In this context, owing to the individual efforts of Mustafa Kemal Pasha, a multi-party system was instituted with the objective of rendering democracy operational in Türkiye, facilitating the representation of varied perspectives within the Grand National Assembly (TBMM), and fostering a competitive political milieu. As a result, on August 12, 1930, the Free Republican

[21] *Hakimiyet-i Milliye*, 26 Haziran 1926, p.1; *Cumhuriyet*, 26 Haziran 1926, p.1; Yaşar Şahin Anıl, *Mahkeme Tutanaklarına Göre İzmir Suikastı Davası,* Kastaş Publishers, Istanbul 2005, p.156-157; Ergun Aybars, *İstiklal Mahkemeleri*, Doğan Kitap, Istanbul 2018, p.433-445.

[22] *Cumhuriyet Halk Fırkası Nizamnamesi 1927,* p.4-5. https://acikerisim.tbmm.gov.tr/server/api/core/bitstreams/52fa6430-bb23-4b92-b6b5-c3f67e957ff4/content

[23] Zeynep Dernek, "Cumhuriyet'in Kuruluşundan Günümüze Tarımsal Gelişmeler", *Süleyman Demirel Üniversitesi Ziraat Fakültesi Dergisi*, No.1 (2006), p.1-12.



Party (Serbest Cumhuriyet Fırkası, SCF) was established as the second opposition party in the nation.[24]

Under the chairmanship of Fethi Bey and the general secretaryship of Nuri Conker, 14 deputies from the Republican People's Party (CHF) joined the Free Republican Party (SCF). The SCF's program included the principle of adherence to republicanism, nationalism, and secularism, emphasizing above all the effort to resolve the chronic economic crisis.[25] The party's program, which quickly gained significant public support, highlighted issues such as the abolition of government interventions that hinder citizens' welfare, cheap credit for peasants and farmers, combating monopolies and usury, freedom of the press, and the encouragement of private enterprise and foreign capital.[26] In the local elections conducted in October 1930, the SCF attained significant success by securing 22 of the 502 municipalities. Nonetheless, during a pre-election assessment of the Aegean region, public protests against the government and its reforms significantly strained relations between the SCF and CHF, and the ascendant opposition pitted Mustafa Kemal Pasha against Ali Fethi Bey.[27] In response to these developments, Ali Fethi Bey presented a petition to the Ministry of Interior on November 17, 1930, advocating for the dissolution of the SCF.[28]

Türkiye during World War II

Following the demise of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk on November 10, 1938, İsmet İnönü assumed the presidency on November 11, 1938, with Celal Bayar serving as prime minister until January 1939. On January 25, 1939, Refik Saydam established the new government, and subsequent to Saydam, Şükrü Saracoğlu, Recep Peker, Hasan Saka, and Şemsettin Günaltay served as prime ministers until 1950. As a consequence of World War II, which transpired from 1939 to 1945, domestic political developments were predominantly influenced by the circumstances prevailing

[24] Ali Fethi Okyar, *Serbest Cumhuriyet Fırkası Nasıl Doğdu, Nasıl Fesh Edildi*, Istanbul 1987, p.7.

[25] Cemil Koçak, H. Özdemir et.al., *Çağdaş Türkiye Tarihi: 1908-1980*, Cem Publications, İstan- bul 1995, p.150.

[26] Taner Timur, *Türk Devrimi ve Sonrası*, İmge Publications, Ankara 1997, p.176.

[27] Okyar, *op.cit.,* p.57; Ergün Aybars, *Atatürkçülük ve Modernleşme*, Zeus Publications, Izmir 2006, p.102; Tevfik Çavdar, *Türkiye Ekonomisinin Tarihi*, İmge Publications, Istanbul 2003, p.226.

[28] *Cumhuriyet*, 18 Kasım 1930, p.1; *Anadolu*, 18 Kasım 1930, p.1.

during the war years. One of İnönü's first initiatives was to enable the political reintegration of significant individuals from the National Struggle period—such as Kâzım Karabekir, Ali Fuat Cebesoy, Refet Bele, Rauf Orbay, Fethi Okyar, and Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın—who had maintained a separation from political engagement.[29] During the party congress convened on December 26, 1938, İnönü was designated as the CHP's "lifelong general chairman," and from May 29 to June 3, 1939, the sixth congress saw the establishment of an Independent Group comprising 21 members within the parliament to monitor governmental supervision.[30]

During the war period, while the nation pursued a policy of non-intervention concurrently with efforts to address economic challenges, its political landscape was characterized by an authoritarian and centralized structure under the designation of National Chief.[31] Although Türkiye remained neutral during the war, its military was maintained in a state of readiness as if anticipating imminent involvement in the conflict, thereby intensifying the pre-existing economic constraints. In response to the challenges posed by the war economy, the National Protection Law was implemented on January 18, 1940,[32] the Wealth Tax on November 11, 1942,[33] and the Soil Products Tax on June 4, 1943.[34] Additionally, rationing measures, which included the bread rationing card which began in Istanbul on January 11, 1942, and later became nationwide, intensified the economic crisis experienced by the public.[35] In addition to poverty and scarcity, the proliferation of epidemics, theft, bribery, and black market activities intensified public dissatisfaction with the government.[36]

As the geopolitical landscape underwent transformations in the post-war era, the CHP also experienced political developments congruent with prevailing international trends. As early as April 1945, preliminary indications were provided suggesting the

29 *İsmet İnönü, Hatıralar*, ed. Sabahattin Selek, Bilgi Publishers, Ankara 2006, p.548-554.

30 Mustafa Turan, "Cumhuriyet Döneminde İki Deneme: Siyasi Müsteşarlıklar ve Müstakil Grup", *Afyon Kocatepe Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi,* S.2 (1999), p.28.

31 Selim Deringil, *Denge Oyunu: İkinci Dünya Savaşı'nda Türkiye'nin Dış Politikası*, Tarih Vakfı Yurt Publications, Istanbul 2014, p.38-41.

32 https://mevzuat.gov.tr/MevzuatMetin/1.3.3780.pdf

33 https://www5.tbmm.gov.tr/tutanaklar/KANUNLAR_KARARLAR.pdf

34 https://www5.tbmm.gov.tr/Tutanaklar/Kanunlar_Kararlar/ Kanuntbmmc02504429.pdf

35 Murat Metinsoy, *İkinci Dünya Savaşı'nda Türkiye*, Homer Books, Istanbul 2007, p.108.

36 Onur Gökçeler, *1946-1950 Yılları Arasında İsmet İnönü'nün Cumhurbaşkanlığı ve Yönetim Anlayışı*, (Master Thesis) Istanbul Üniversitesi SBE, Istanbul 2018, p.20.



shift towards a multi-party political system.[37] On May 19, 1945, President İnönü presented a discourse regarding the democratization of the regime. Subsequently, on June 7, 1945, the initial stride towards the establishment of a new political party was achieved through the "Quadruple Motion" presented by Celal Bayar, Adnan Menderes, Fuat Köprülü, and Refik Koraltan. On September 22, 1945, the National Development Party (Milli Kalkınma Partisi, MKP) was founded. The Democrat Party (DP), which would emerge as the principal opposition party in the multi-party system, was established on January 7, 1946, under the guidance of Celal Bayar, Adnan Menderes, Fuat Köprülü, and Refik Koraltan.[38]

In response to the global trend of democratization, following the CHP Congress on May 10, 1946, several liberal reforms were enacted, including the elimination of restrictions on the formation of associations and parties categorized by class under the Associations Law, the adoption of a single-tier electoral system, and the cessation of the titles "Immutable General Chairmanship" and "National Chief." From that juncture forward, the CHP repealed numerous resolutions from the preceding era that had curtailed freedoms.[39] In the single-tier parliamentary elections held on July 21, 1946, the CHP won 397 seats, the Democrat Party (DP) 61, and independent parties secured 7 seats.[40]

Conversely, the liberal reforms were considered inadequate by the Democrat Party (DP), which vehemently criticized the anomalies in the electoral processes and the autocratic governance of the government. On January 10, 1947, the DP drafted the "Liberty Pact" (Hürriyet Misakı).[41] This pact, which called for the repeal of laws inconsistent with the constitution, changes to the election law, and the separation of the presidency from the party leadership, exacberated tensions between the CHP and DP.[42] On July 12, 1947, İnönü issued a statement declaring that, as president, he would maintain an equal distance from both parties, which briefly eased

37 Rıfkı Salim Burçak, *Türkiye'de Demokrasiye Geçiş 1945-1950*, Olgaç Printing Press, 1979, p.45- 46.

38 *Cumhuriyet*, 8 Ocak 1946, p.1.

39 Kemal H. Karpat, *Osmanlı'dan Günümüze Edebiyat ve Toplum*, trans O. G. Ayas, Timaş Publications, Istanbul 2017, p.246.

40 *Milletvekili Genel Seçimleri 1923-2011*, Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu Matbaası, Ankara 2012, p.8.

41 Şükrü Esirci, *Menderes Diyor Ki,* Birinci Kitap, Demokrasi Publications, Istanbul 1967, p.38- 43.

42 Ahmed E. Yalman, *Yakın Tarihte Gördüklerim ve Geçirdiklerim 2*, ed. Erol Şadi Erdinç, Istanbul 1997, p.1364.

the political climate.[43] The principles of separating party leadership from the presidency and the prime ministership from the deputy chairmanship were accepted at the CHP Congress in November-December 1947. However, the "Main Cases Commission Report" adopted at the DP Congress beginning on June 20, 1949, stirred up animosities in CHP-DP relations. The report reaffirmed requests for revising undemocratic laws and renewing the election law, stating that the 1950 elections held without these changes would not represent the national will and would be met with national hostility.[44]

In summary, in conjunction with the CHP's liberal reforms, various democratic practices were instituted post-1948, including the integration of Elective Religious Culture courses into the curriculum, the inauguration of İmam Hatip courses on January 15, 1949, the establishment of Ankara University's Faculty of Theology on November 21, the public accessibility of tombs of Turkish elders renowned for their artistic merit on March 1, 1950, and the enactment of a new electoral law in the same year. Nevertheless, as the Democratic Party (DP) articulated increasingly democratic aspirations, the discord between the governing and opposition parties progressively intensified, culminating in the nation's engagement in the 1950 elections amidst this politically heightened environment.

The Cold War Era (1950-1980) 1950-1960: The Years of the Democratic Party

In 1950, when Türkiye's population neared 21 million, the general elections conducted on May 14 culminated in the Democrat Party (DP) attaining power with 54.9% of the vote, thereby concluding a 27-year period of single-party dominance.[45] On May 21, Celal Bayar assumed the role of the third President of the Republic of Türkiye, while on May 22, Adnan Menderes established the 19th government, thereby becoming the ninth Prime Minister. The foundational principles of the DP program, including "the achievement of democracy through a comprehensive and progressive perspective, social justice, and humanitarian solidarity," resulted in the commemoration of May 14 under titles such as the "White Revolution," the "DP

[43] "İnönü'nün Millete Beyannamesi", *Ulus*, 25 Temmuz 1946, p.1.

[44] Cem Eroğul, *Demokrat Parti Tarihi ve İdeolojisi,* İmge Kitabevi, Ankara 2003, p.76-77.

[45] *Zafer*, 17 Mayıs 1950, p.1; *Son Posta*, 17 Mayıs 1950, p.1; *Cumhuriyet*, 17 Mayıs 1950, p.1.



Revolution," and the "Democracy Festival."[46] In contrast to the CHP's modernization paradigm, which is influenced by statist and strict secular perspectives, the DP embodied a modernization model characterized by moderation, political representation of the diverse beliefs, values, and lifestyles of the wider population, and the adoption of liberal economic policies, thereby establishing Türkiye's center-right tradition.[47]

As articulated in the DP's election manifesto, "there exist reforms that have become integral to the public's heritage and those that have not; those accepted by the populace will be maintained, whereas the remainder will be discarded."[48] In pursuit of this aim, the initial step taken by them was to rescind the prohibition on reciting the call to prayer (ezan) in Arabic on June 16, 1950.[49] On July 5, the ban on religious programming on the radio was also lifted, and optional religious courses were added to the 4th and 5th-grade elementary school curricula.[50] Education in Imam Hatip High Schools began in the 1954-1955 academic year, and the Istanbul Higher Islamic Institute was established on November 19, 1959.[51]

On July 14, 1950, a general amnesty was granted, and on July 15, 1950, the New Press Law was enacted.[52] Nevertheless, a range of limitations persisted for specific groups throughout the DP era. On September 13, 1950, educators were barred from participating in partisan political activities. On July 21, 1953, amendments to the university regulations prohibited professors from engaging in political activities. In an effort to combat communism, works by Russian authors were purged from educational library collections, leftist political organizations were disbanded, and on October 26, 1951, the TKP Arrests commenced as part of inquiries into communist

46 Cemil Koçak, *Demokratlar ve Halkçılar 1950-1954,* Timaş Publications, Istanbul 2024, p.92- 92.

47 Ali Satan, Hadiye Yılmaz Odabaşı, "Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nde Toplumsal ve İç Politik Gelişmeler", *Meşrutiyet'ten 21. Yüzyıla Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Tarihi,* ed. C. Eraslan, U. Dere, Bilge Kültür Sanat, Istanbul 2024, p.495.; Nuray Mert, *Merkez Sağın Kısa Tarihi,* Selis Books, Istanbul 2007, p.19.

48 *Zafer*, 9 Mayıs 1950, p.1-2; *Hükümetler-Programları ve Genel Kurul Görüşmeleri*, ed. İ. Neziroğlu, T. Yılmaz, C.2, TBMM Başkanlığı Publications, Ankara 2013, p.758.

49 *TBMM Tutanak Dergisi*, C.1, Dokuzuncu Birleşim, s.182, https://www5.tbmm.gov.tr/tutanaklar/TUTANAK/TBMM/d09/c001/tbmm09001009.pdf [Date of Access 11.02.2024].

50 *T.C. Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı Tebliğler Dergisi*, Vol.618 (1950), p.116.

51 Hadiye Yılmaz Odabaşı, *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nin 100 Yılı Kronoloji (1923-2023),* Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi Publications, Ankara 2025.

52 https://www5.tbmm.gov.tr/tutanaklar/KANUNLAR_KARARLAR/kanunmgkc06602950.pdf, [Date of Access 14.06.2024].

activities.[53] On July 25, 1951, the Law on Crimes Committed Against Atatürk was passed,[54] and on August 1, it was mandated that portraits of Atatürk be hung in government offices. On January 27, 1954, the Nation Party, the Nationalists Association, and nineteen Islamist magazines were closed down on the grounds that they were "societies based on religion and concealing their real aims."[55]

Another incident that exacerbated the tensions between the DP and CHP was the property assets of the CHP, which had maintained its 27-year dominance by positioning itself as a state party.[56] On December 2, 1950, the headquarters of the CHP was seized based on allegations of wrongful acquisition of property, asserting that the properties were owned by the state and had been unlawfully taken by the party.[57] On December 14, 1953, the Law on the Transfer to the Treasury of Properties Unjustly Acquired by the Republican People's Party (CHP) was passed in the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye.[58] As the ruling-opposition relations increasingly worsened, especially through the press, the Law on Certain Crimes to be Committed via Publication and Radio was enacted on March 9, 1954, prescribing severe penalties for crimes committed through press and radio.[59]

On May 2, 1954, the Democratic Party (DP) ascended to the status of the ruling party, achieving a notable vote share of 58.4% in the general elections, which saw the participation of approximately 10 million voters and a turnout rate of 88.6%.[60] One of the initial actions undertaken by the government was the enactment of a law on June 21, 1954, which conferred the right to retire upon judges and professors who had attained the age of 60 or had completed 25 years of service.[61] Administrative changes occurred in certain provinces captured by opposition parties; notably, Malatya Province was bifurcated on June 14, 1954, resulting in the formation of a

53 https://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/arsiv/7979.pdf, [Date of Access 17.06.2024].

54 https://ataturkansiklopedisi.gov.tr/bilgi/ataturk-aleyhine-islenen-suclar-hakkinda-kanun

55 Necati Aksanyar, "Demokrat Partinin Din Politikalarının Türk Basınında Yansımaları (1950-1954)", *Akademik Bakış*, No.11 (2007), p.20.

56 Koçak, *Demokratlar ve Halkçılar,* p.91, 58, 101-102. Fevzi Çakmak, Halkevlerinin Kapatılması ve Cumhuriyet "Halk Partisi Mallarına El Konulması" https://www.historystudies.net/dergi/tar20151250846.pdf (Accessed on 27.03.2025)

57 *Cumhuriyet*, 13 December 1950, p.1.

58 *T.C. Resmî Gazete*, 16 December 1953, S.8584, p.7773-7774.

59 Hıfzı Topuz, *Türk Basın Tarihi*, Remzi Kitabevi, Istanbul 2015, s.193.

60 *Zafer*, 4 Mayıs 1954, p.1; *Cumhuriyet*, 4 Mayıs 1954, p.1; *Vatan*, 4 Mayıs 1954, p.1.

61 *Cumhuriyet*, 6 July 1954, p.1.

new province entitled Adıyaman.[62] Kırşehir Province, where the Republican Nation Party (CMP) received the majority of votes, was downgraded to a district and attached to Nevşehir Province on June 30, 1954.[63] On the same day, the "Law on the Amendment and Removal of Certain Articles of the Parliamentary Election Law" was enacted, changing many provisions of the election law and preventing political parties from entering elections with joint lists and the opposition from benefiting from radio broadcasting.[64]

One of the most noteworthy occurrences during the second term of the Democratic Party (DP) administration was the incidents of September 6-7. During a period of heightened tensions regarding the Cyprus issue, on September 6, 1955, the State Radio announced at midnight that an explosion had occurred in the vicinity of Atatürk's birthplace and the Turkish Consulate in Thessaloniki, resulting in the breakage of the house's windows. Following the dissemination of news regarding the damage inflicted by the bombing on Atatürk's residence in the *Istanbul Ekspres* newspaper[65] that afternoon, a demonstration was orchestrated at Taksim Square, featuring the involvement of multiple student unions and associations. Subsequent to the rally, businesses not owned by Muslims on İstiklal Street experienced vandalism and looting. Consequently, numerous residences, offices, religious institutions, and educational facilities were annihilated. The event elicited considerable attention on the global agenda; however, its influence on the nation's political climate was likewise substantial.[66] As a result of the events of September 6-7, martial law was implemented; concurrently, restrictions[67] were placed on the press, newspapers and magazines were shuttered, and journalists were apprehended, which further intensified the occurrences. In addition to the opposition press, some newspapers supporting the DP began to criticize the government's severe measures.[68] In fact, some CHP depu-

62 *Cumhuriyet*, 15 June 1954, p.1.

63 *Vatan*, 1 Temmuz 1954, p.1; *Cumhuriyet*, 1 Temmuz 1954, p.1; https://www5.tbmm.gov.tr/tutanaklar/KANUNLAR_KARARLAR/kanuntbmmc03706429.pdf, [Date of Access 16.07.2024].

64 https://www5.tbmm.gov.tr/tutanaklar/KANUNLAR_KARARLAR/kanuntbmmc03706428.pdf, [Date of Access 16.07.2024].

65 For detailed information see Dilek Güven, *Cumhuriyet Dönemi Azınlık Politikaları Bağlamında 6-7 Eylül Olayları,* trans. Bahar Şahin, Tarih Vakfı Publications, Istanbul 2005.

66 *Istanbul Ekspres*, 6 September 1955, p.1.

67 https://www5.tbmm.gov.tr/tutanaklar/KANUNLAR_KARARLAR/kanuntbmmc03806732.pdf, [Date of Access 12.07.2024].

68 *Demokrat İzmir*, 28 Ekim 1955, p.1.

ties were arrested on charges of insulting the moral personality of the Turkish Grand National Assembly, and the parliamentary immunities of some deputies were lifted.[69]

The Democratic Party (DP), which acquired a majority of the popular vote through its extensive and progressive discourse on democracy in contrast to the anti-democratic actions of the preceding CHP government, experienced a decline in public support attributable to the prohibitions and sanctions it implemented to quell opposition, alongside the economic challenges of the era. In fact, the DP's proportion of the vote declined from 58.4% to 48.6% in the 1957 elections.[70] At the same time, following the 1957 elections, political struggle in Türkiye intensified further, increasing political and social polarization. On the other hand, opposition parties began to form alliances in the country's increasingly tense political environment. In response, on October 12, 1958, the National Front (Vatan Cephesi) was established under the leadership of the DP.[71] On November 24, 1958, the National Opposition Front (Milli Muhalefet Cephesi) was founded with the discourse of the "Constituent Assembly."[72] The main claim of the Opposition Front was that the country was experiencing a political and economic crisis and that the government was moving toward dictatorship. According to Prime Minister Menderes, the real dictator was İnönü, and the opposition was trying to create a coup atmosphere.[73] The CHP attributed the deepening political and economic crisis to the DP government's enactment of unconstitutional laws. The Opposition's Declaration of Initial Aims, outlining the steps to be taken to remedy the current situation, was announced on January 14, 1959.[74]

On February 17, 1959, the Prime Minister's plane, which was taking off for London for the Cyprus talks, crashed near London.[75] Prime Minister Menderes

69 Satan, Odabaşı, *op.cit.,* p.509-510.

70 *1950-1965 Milletvekili ve 1961-1964 Cumhuriyet Senatosu Üye Seçim Sonuçları*, Devlet İstatistik Enstitüsü Publications, Ankara 1966, s.VII; *Milletvekili Genel Seçimleri (1923-2011),* Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu Matbaası, Ankara 2012, p.25.

71 Zehra Arslan, "İç Politikadaki Gelişmeler", *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Tarihi,* Vol. 2, Atatürk Araş- tırma Merkezi Publications, Ankara 2023, p.1168-1169.

72 Fahir Giritlioğlu, *Türk Siyasi Hayatında Cumhuriyet Halk Partisinin Mevkii,* Vol.1, Ayyıldız Printing Press, Ankara 1965, p.445.

73 *Hürriyet*, 6 September 1958, p.1; *Milliyet* 6 September 1958, p.1.

74 *CHP, 14. Kurultayı İlk Hedefler Beyannamesi*, Kurtulmuş Printing Press, Istanbul 1960, p.3.

75 *Zafer*, 18 February 1959, p.1; *Akşam*, 18 February 1959, p.1; *Milliyet*, 18 February 1959, p.1.



survived the accident injured.[76] The crash temporarily calmed the conflict between the government and the opposition. However, relations soon deteriorated again, with chaos and fights in the Parliament increasing, leading to session suspensions.[77] On April 7, 1960, the DP released a statement alleging that the CHP was provoking public and military animosity towards the government, and on April 18, 1960, the Parliament endorsed the motion to form a 15-member Investigation Committee consisting of DP deputies to examine accusations that the CHP was colluding with the military to orchestrate a coup.[78] To protest the Investigation Committee, university students held a rally on April 28, 1960, in Beyazıt, Istanbul. In response to the events, martial law was declared in Ankara and Istanbul.[79] On May 5, 1960, students organized the 555K (at 5 o'clock on the 5th day of the 5th month in Kızılay) protest in Ankara against the government, and Prime Minister Menderes was met with the angry reaction of the demonstrators upon his arrival at Kızılay.[80] Whereas, on May 15, the Prime Minister was greeted by an enthusiastic crowd of approximately 300,000 people in İzmir.[81] The military coup, long prepared through junta activities, took place after the opposition's street protests, at 04:36 on May 27, 1960, with a declaration broadcast from Ankara radio. A small group of low-ranking soldiers, on behalf of the Turkish Armed Forces (TSK), announced that they had taken over the state administration.

1960-1980: The Period Between Two Coups

The 1960s

The first military coup in the annals of the Republic of Türkiye transpired on May 27, 1960. For the first time in a parliamentary system, individuals affiliated with the governing party that had been elected democratically, were subjected to legal proceedings, including male and female deputies, ministers, the prime minister, and the president. In total, 592 defendants underwent trial. The Yassıada Trials, which were held in public by the High Court of Justice, commenced on October 14, 1960, and extended over a period of 11 months. There were a total of

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76 *Cumhuriyet*, 19 February 1959, p.1, 5.

77 *Cumhuriyet*, 14 May 1959, s.1; *Hürriyet*, 14 May 1959, s.1; *Vatan*, 14 May 1959, s.1.

78 *Zafer*, 19 April 1960, p.1.

79 *Zafer*, 29 April 1959, p.1.

80 Kabacalı, *op.cit.,* p.141-143.

81 *Zafer*, 18 Mayıs 1960, p.1.

19 distinct cases that were adjudicated. In the initial instance, a sitting president was prosecuted for the first time in the annals of Turkish history. The trials concluded on September 15, 1961. Among the 592 defendants, 123 were acquitted. Thirty-one individuals received life sentences, whereas fifteen were sentenced to death. Four of the death sentences were delivered with unanimous agreement, while the remaining eleven were decided by a majority vote. Notwithstanding, only the four unanimous verdicts were sanctioned. As President Celal Bayar surpassed the age of 65, his death sentence was reduced to life imprisonment. Finance Minister Hasan Polatkan and Foreign Minister Fatin Rüştü Zorlu were executed on September 16, 1961, whereas Prime Minister Adnan Menderes was executed on September 17, 1961.[82]

After the coup, the National Unity Committee (MBK), comprising of 38 officers and chaired by the Commander of the Land Forces Cemal Gürsel, governed the country between May 30, 1960, and January 6, 1961.[83] On June 12, 1960, the MBK accepted the provisional constitution and announced the members of the National Security Council (MGK). On November 13, the 14-member right wing was purged from the MBK and sent abroad.[84] On July 9, 1961, a referendum was conducted regarding the newly drafted constitution, which ultimately resulted in the acceptance of the 1961 Constitution with 61.5% of the votes cast in favor. The initial segment of the constitution delineated the attributes of the Republic, the sovereignty of the state, its official language and capital; the legislative, executive, and judicial authorities; the preeminence and obligatory character of the constitution; and the stability of the state regime. The second section, which governed fundamental rights and duties, elucidated rights including equality, personal inviolability, protection of private life, inviolability of domicile, freedom of movement and residence, freedom of thought and expression, freedom of conscience and religion, freedom of scientific and artistic pursuits, freedom of the press, the right to assembly and demonstration,

82 https://www.indyturk.com/node/201146/haber/yass%C4%B1ada-yarg%C4%B1lamalar%-C4%B1n%C4%B1n-hukuki-dayana%C4%9F%C4%B1-kald%C4%B1r%C4%B1ld%-C4%B1, [Date of Access 11.06.2024]; İlyas Topçu, Sema Akılmak Topçu, "Adnan Mende res'in Yargılanması ve İdamı", *Akademik Bakış Dergisi*, S.61 (2017), s.69-71; Ayrıca bk. *Yüksek Adalet Divanı Kararları/Istanbul Yassıada 14 Ekim 1960-15 Eylül 1961*, Kabalcı Publications, Ankara 2007.

83 Mehmet Ö. Alkan, "1960 Darbesi ve Üniversiteden Tasfiyeler: 147'ler Olayı", *Toplumsal Tarih*, S.286 (2017), p.60-63.

84 Zehra ASLAN, "Milli Birlik Komitesi (MBK)", https://ataturkansiklopedisi.gov.tr/bilgi/milli-birlik-komitesi-mbk, [Date of Access 12.06.2024].



the right to form associations, personal security, the entitlement to seek legal remedies, and the right to judicial recourse.[85]

The 1961 Constitution supplanted the concept of "unity of powers" present in the 1924 Constitution with a more nuanced principle of separation of powers; the legislative, executive, and judicial branches were distinctly delineated. The establishment of the Constitutional Court occurred for the first time. It was determined that the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye (TBMM) would comprise of the National Assembly and the Republican Senate, thus implementing a bicameral system for the first time.[86] Additionally, the power of the TBMM, which exercised sovereignty on behalf of the nation and was based on parliamentary majority rule, was limited by granting authority to relatively autonomous institutions such as the National Security Council, the Constitutional Court, Universities, the Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (TRT), and the State Planning Organization (DPT), thereby attempting to build a pluralistic and liberal state understanding. Thus, a constitution was created that was much more liberal than the 1924 Constitution, placing greater emphasis on human rights and freedoms.[87]

The shift to a civilian parliamentary system transpired with the general elections conducted on October 15, 1961, which marked the inaugural application of the proportional representation system. The CHP obtained 36.74% of the votes, while the AP secured 34.79%, the CMKP received 13.96%, and the New Türkiye Party (YTP) garnered 13.73%. In the Senate elections, the AP secured 71 seats, the CHP obtained 36, the YTP acquired 27, and the CKMP elected 16 senators. Notwithstanding the formal commencement of civilian politics, the impact of the military remained consistently perceptible in political affairs, attributable to the systemic framework of the system. Consequently, owing to this influence, Cemal Gürsel was elected as the 4th President on October 26. On November 20, the nation's inaugural coalition government, the CHP-AP government, was established under the premiership of İsmet İnönü. In 1962 and 1963, two further attempts at a coup d'état

85 Bilal Tunç, "Türk Anayasa Tarihinde 1961 Anayasası'nın Yeri ve Önemi", *Karadeniz Araştırmaları*, No.67 (2020), p.657-692.

86 *Temsilciler Meclisi Tutanak Dergisi (TMTD)*, Vol: 3, B: 47 (18.4.1961), p.361-366.

87 Fevzi Demir, *Cumhuriyet Dönemi Türk Anayasaları ve Hükümet Sistemleri*, p.64-65, https://hukuk.deu.edu.tr, [Date of Access 03.05.2024]; Suna Kili, "Temel Hak ve Özgürlükler Yönünden 1961 ve 1982 Anayasaları", p.25-26, https://ayam.anayasa.gov.tr/media/6324/suna_kili.pdf, [Date of Access 03.05.2024].

transpired.[88] Until 1965, political life in Türkiye was dominated by short-term coalitions and political instability. A stern letter sent by U.S. President L. B. Johnson to Prime Minister İnönü in relation to the Cyprus issue[89] marked a turning point in the Türkiye-U.S. relationship, which greatly undermined Türkiye's trust in the United States. This significant development in Turkish foreign would soon reverberate within domestic politics as well.

In the general elections conducted on October 10, 1965, the AP obtained 52.9% of the vote, the CHP 28.8%, the MP 6.3%, the YTP 3.7%, Independent candidates 3.2%, the TİP 3.0%, and the CKMP 2.2%. With the acquisition of 14 seats, the Workers' Party of Türkiye (TİP) distinguished itself as the inaugural socialist party to gain representation in the Turkish Grand National Assembly. Süleyman Demirel assumed the role of Prime Minister in the single-party administration established by the AP. A notable first of the era was that, in contrast to earlier Prime Ministers who originated from military, bureaucratic, or intellectual backgrounds, Demirel was the offspring of a peasant, which enhanced his popularity among common citizens and bolstered the perception of the AP as the party of the people.[90] Following Gürsel's withdrawal from office due to illness, Cevdet Sunay was elected as Türkiye's fifth President on March 28, 1966.

During the latter part of the 1960s, the discord between the incumbent party AP and the opposition party CHP escalated significantly, primarily as a result of divergent policies implemented regarding the nation's economic and social challenges. During this era, the primary focus of political parties and the progressively politicized sectors of society was "how to safeguard the nation." Notwithstanding certain distinctions, two primary tendencies surfaced at the center. The first tendency suggests that the experience of the DP government illustrated the superfluity of profound reforms for the establishment of democracy in the nation, and that progress could only be attained through the governance of right-wing conservative parties. The second tendency, nevertheless, posited that the DP experience indicated the nation's unreadiness for a Western-style democratic milieu; furthermore, it emphasized that blindly adopting Western policies or models should be avoided, and instead, national and progressive policies ought to be implemented under a one-party system.[91]

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88 Hikmet Özdemir, "Siyasal Tarih 1960-1980", *Türkiye Tarihi 4*, ed. Sina Akşin, Cem Publishers, Istanbul 1995, p.211-212.

89 *Hürriyet*, 13 Ocak 1966, p.1.

90 Feroz Ahmad, *Demokrasi Sürecinde Türkiye*, Hil Publications, Istanbul 1993, p.278.

91 Özdemir, *op.cit.*, p.212.



During this time, two political parties were also formed that would significantly influence Turkish politics for an extended period. In 1965, Alparslan Türkeş and his associates integrated into CKMP, and following Türkeş's election as chairman, the party was rebranded as the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) in 1969.[92] Another new party of the era, the National Order Party (MNP), was established on January 26, 1970, under the leadership of Professor Necmettin Erbakan, former head of the Chambers Union and respectful of property rights, conducive to legitimate earnings and the private sector, while also antagonistic toward collaborative and opportunistic entities as well as ideologies originating from foreign sources.[93]

In addition to the diversity present within the parliament, this era witnessed the influence of both the advantageous conditions established by the 1961 Constitution and the effects of global developments, which collectively facilitated the rise of extra-parliamentary opposition. During this period, labor and particularly student organizations from both the right and left political spectrums engaged in anti-American protests, as heightened anti-American sentiments were fueled by the situation in Cyprus. The primary element intensifying the extra-parliamentary left-wing opposition during this era was the 1968 Movement. The conviction that resolving student challenges necessitated confronting the nation's wider concerns led to the expansion of the university's efforts and their subsequent politicization. Concurrently, the ideological divide between the right and left intensified. On February 16, 1969, during the Workers' March Against Imperialism and Exploitation, orchestrated by 76 civil society organizations primarily composed of student groups, a violent confrontation occurred in Taksim between right- and left-wing workers and students, leading to approximately 200 injuries and the deaths of two workers. This event became incorporated into the nation's history as "Bloody Sunday."[94]

The 1970s

The political, economic, and social conflicts of the 1960s culminated in the memorandum released by the Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) on March 12, 1971, attributing responsibility to the government and parliament for the prevailing violent occurrences. Indeed, the occurrences that intensified in conjunction with the

92 Alparslan Türkeş, *Dokuz Işık*, Berikan Publishing House, Ankara 2017, p.5-24.

93 Özdemir, *op.cit.*, p.225.

94 https://www5.tbmm.gov.tr/tutanaklar/TUTANAK/MM /d02/c035/mm 02035064.pdf, s.22-23, [Date of Access 01.05.2024]; *Cumhuriyet*, 17 February 1969, p.1.

1968 Movement also instigated numerous coup attempts both within and beyond the armed forces, while the March 12 Memorandum illustrated that the military regarded the burgeoning leftist movement as the predominant threat.[95] On that very day, the Demirel Administration tendered its resignation. Beginning March 26, 1971, four interim governments were established: the First Nihat Erim, the Second Nihat Erim, the Ferit Melen, and the Naim Talu administrations.

Asserting that the conflict and instability stemmed from the 1961 Constitution, certain amendments were implemented in the constitution within the initial two years after the memorandum, which placed limitations on the enjoyment of fundamental rights. Moreover, the inaugural State Security Courts (Devlet Güvenlik Mahkemeleri, DGM) were established on March 15, 1973.[96]

The unprecedented period that began with the 12 March Memorandum came to an end with the general elections of 14 October 1973.[97] According to the results of the 14 October 1973 elections, the CHP won 185 seats, the AP 149, the MSP 48, the DP 45, the CGP 13, the MHP 3, the TBP 1, and independents 6 parliamentary seats. After these elections, Bülent Ecevit, the Chairman of the CHP who would later be recognized by the moniker "Karaoğlan" and who formulated the "Left of the Center" policy, was entrusted with the responsibility of establishing a government. On 26 January 1974, the coalition government of the CHP-MSP was established.[98]

The most notable occurrence of the era was the Cyprus Peace Operation initiated on 20 July 1974, aimed at terminating the oppression and persecution of the Turkish Cypriot community by Greek Cypriots. The Turkish Government commenced the Peace Operation on 20 July 1974 to safeguard the security of the Turkish population on the island, adhering to the terms of the 1960 Guarantee Agreement.[99] The United States, opposed the Peace Operation and reacted strongly to the lifting of the opium poppy cultivation ban in Türkiye, and decided to impose a military embargo on Türkiye on 5 February 1975. In addition to the economic challenges re-

[95] Maurus Reinkowski, *Türkiye Tarihi Atatürk'ten Bugüne,* trans Hamide Koyukan, Tarih Vakfı Yurt Publications, Istanbul 2024, p.149.

[96] Özdemir, *op.cit.*, p.232.

[97] Murat Karataş, "Türkiye'de Asker-Sivil İlişkileri Bağlamında 12 Mart Muhtırası ve Partiler Üstü Hükümet Modeli Üzerine Bir Değerlendirme", *Anadolu ve Balkan Araştırmaları Dergisi*, No.3 (2019), p.88.

[98] *Millet Meclisi Tutanak Dergisi,* Dönem 4, Vol.1, 38'inci Birleşim, (07.02.1974), p.549-561.

[99] "Kıbrıs Meselesinin Tarihçesi, BM Müzakerelerinin Başlangıcı", https://www.mfa.gov.tr/kib- ris-meselesinin-tarihcesi_-bm-muzakerelerinin-baslangici.tr.mfa, [Date of Access 15.06.2024]; Reinkowski, *op.cit*., p.133-134.



sulting from the oil crisis and the U.S. embargo, Germany's cessation of labor recruitment exacerbated the situation, leading to a profound economic crisis in the period of 1974-1975. In this context, the CHP-MSP coalition government proved to be unsustainable, ultimately dissolving due to disputes regarding multiple policies.[100] Following Ecevit's resignation from the government on 18 September 1974 and his subsequent advocacy for early elections, after the brief tenure of the Sadi Irmak government, on 6 December 1974, AP Chairman Demirel addressed a letter to the leaders of MSP, DP, CGP, and MHP, proposing the establishment of a nationalist coalition in opposition to the left. The Nationalist Front (Milliyetçi Cephe, MC) assumed power on March 31, 1975. During the administration of the MC government, the consequences of the economic crisis exacerbated, while political polarization, conflicts, and incidents of terrorism consistently escalated. The occurrence of violent events led to 37 fatalities in 1975, 108 in 1976, and 319 in 1977.[101] On 1 May 1977, during a rally held in Taksim, gunfire was opened on participants, causing 37 deaths; this event became known in history as "Bloody May Day."[102]

The intensification of violent events resulted in heightened demands for premature elections, and in the elections conducted on June 5, 1977, the CHP established a minority administration with 41.38% of the electorate's support. After the brief tenure of the second Ecevit minority government, which resigned after a mere month, Demirel established the second Nationalist Front (II. Milliyetçi Cephe, MC) government on July 21, which included the AP, MHP, and MSP; however, this administration also proved to be short-lived. The third Ecevit minority government, which assumed power on January 17, 1978, remained in office for approximately two years and implemented a national economic program in conjunction with efforts designed to mitigate the exacerbation of social polarization and conflicts. Nonetheless, terrorism persisted without diminution, leading to the assassinations of notable individuals such as Abdi İpekçi, the editor-in-chief of Milliyet newspaper; Ilgaz Aykutlu, the Head of the Political Branch of the Istanbul Police Department; Hikmet Tekin, the Mayor of Bingöl from the MHP; Hamit Fendoğlu, the Mayor of Malatya from the MHP; and Gün Sazak, a former MHP Minister of Customs and Monopolies.

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100 Ali Gevgili, *Yükseliş ve Düşüş,* Bağlam Publications, Istanbul 1987, p.750-756; Özdemir, *op.cit.*, p.237-238.

101 Ruşen Keleş, Artun Ünsal, *Kent ve Siyasal Şiddet*, AÜSBF Publications, Ankara 1982, p.35.

102 Hüseyin Akyol, *Türkiye'de Sağ Örgütler: Bölüne Bölüne İktidar Olmak*, Phoenix Publishers, Ankara 2011, p.182; Satan, Odabaşı, *op.cit.,* p.148-149.

After the Ecevit administration, the Demirel government assumed power after the elections of October 14, 1979. Nonetheless, the prevailing climate of terrorism in the nation endured. The Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) provided their initial reaction to the prevailing conflict environment through a memorandum released on December 27. Furthermore, during this time, attacks by terrorists targeting elected officials persisted.[103] From the second half of the 1970s onwards, bloody clashes and acts of terrorism, which had significantly intensified, also targeted neighborhoods predominantly inhabited by Alevi citizens in Sivas, Çorum, and Maraş.[104] Invoking the aforementioned turmoil, chaos, and conflict as a rationale, the military declared its assumption of power via a statement broadcast on TRT at 4:00 a.m. on the morning of September 12.

Integration with the Global World and Changing Türkiye (1980-2000)

1980s: Turgut Ozal Years

The National Security Council (National Security Council, MGK) assumed governance of the nation on the evening of September 12.[105] The majority of citizens became aware of the coup the subsequent morning upon encountering military personnel. Most citizens found out about the coup the following morning when they encountered soldiers on the streets. The night curfew began on September 13 and lasted until 1982. The MGK designated retired Admiral Bülent Ulusu, former Commander of the Turkish Navy, as Prime Minister, and a cabinet consisting of technocratic civilians along with several retired military officers was formed on September 21, 1980. The military designated this new period as the "Era of Peace and Security," expressing a commitment to implement all requisite measures to attain this objective. Initially, 13 regions operating under martial law were established. The 1961 Constitution was abrogated, the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye (TBMM) was dissolved, and it was succeeded by a Consultative Assembly. Polit-

[103] Orhan Gökdemir, *Faili Meçhul Cinayetler Tarihi*, Destek Publications, Istanbul 2011, p.312.

[104] Yalçın Çakmak, "İtikattan Kimliğe: Dinamikler ve Karşı Dinamikler Bağlamında Yetmişli Yıllarda Aleviler", *Türkiye'nin 1970'li Yılları*, ed. Mete Kaan Kaynar, İletişim Publications, Istanbul 2020, p.649.

[105] For the military's decision to stage a coup and the coup process, see Şerafettin Turan, *Türk Devrim Tarihi*, 5. Kitap, Bilgi Publishers, Ankara 2002, p.398-414. The NSC was composed of General Kenan Evren, Chief of General Staff; General Nurettin Ersin, Commander of the Land Forces; General Tahsin Şahinkaya, Commander of the Air Forces; Admiral Nejat Tümer, Commander of the Naval Forces; and General Sedat Celasun, Commander of the Gendarmerie.



ical parties were prohibited, their leaders apprehended, and subsequently excluded from political activity.[106] During the September 12 timeframe, a total of 650,000 individuals were apprehended, while 1,683,000 persons were registered by governmental authorities. Irrespective of political alignment, detainees were subjected to severe torture during prolonged custody durations that could extend up to 90 days. A total of 366 individuals perished under questionable circumstances, while 43 resorted to suicide. Among political prisoners, 17 individuals identified as left-wing and 8 identified as right-wing were executed. Based on MGK data, from September 12, 1980, to March 31, 1983, 230,000 individuals were adjudicated in 210,000 cases, resulting in a total of 32,650 individuals receiving diverse sentences. Additionally, 98,404 individuals were prosecuted for their affiliation with organizations. Among those convicted, 4,258 were identified as right-wing militants, 17,494 as left-wing militants, 689 as separatists, and 10,209 as possessing ideological orientations that remained indeterminate. Passports were withheld from 388,000 individuals. 30,000 persons were terminated from their employment due to being labeled as "undesirable." 14,000 individuals were deprived of their citizenship, while 30,000 sought refuge abroad as political exiles. 300 individuals perished under ambiguous circumstances, and 299 died in correctional facilities, with evidence indicating that 171 succumbed to torture. During this era, a significant number of literary and cinematic works were prohibited. Approximately 39 tons of books, magazines, and newspapers were incinerated, and 937 films were forbidden due to their perceived detrimental nature. The operations of 23,677 organizations were halted. A total of 3,854 educators, 120 university professors, and 47 judges were terminated from their positions. A cumulative sentence of 3,315 years and 6 months of imprisonment was levied on 400 journalists, while newspapers experienced a 300-day hiatus in their publication. Numerous artists were compelled to seek refuge abroad due to political circumstances or were unable to repatriate to Türkiye.[107] Fundamentally, the reorganisation of Türkiye's political system during this period had destructive effects that persist to this day.[108]

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106 Sina Akşin, *Kısa Türkiye Tarihi*, Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Publications, Istanbul 2023, p.275.

107 *Ülkemizde Demokrasiye Müdahale Eden Tüm Darbe ve Muhtıralar ile Demokrasiyi İşlevsiz Kılan Diğer Bütün Girişim ve Süreçlerin Tüm Boyutlarıyla Araştırılarak Alınması Gereken Önlemlerin Belirlenmesi Amacıyla Kurulan Meclis Araştırması Komisyon Raporu*, TBMM Kasım 2012 https://www.5.tbmm.gov.tr/sirasayi/donem24/yil01/ss376_Vol. 1.pdf, p.14-15, [Date of Access 11.06.2024].

108 Cezmi Eraslan, "Atatürk'ten Sonra Türkiye'nin İç Politikası", *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Tarihi II,* Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi Publications, Ankara 2005, p.628-629.

In 1982, the constitutional referendum and the presidential election were conducted concurrently; during the public referendum on November 7, the new constitution received approval with 91.4% of the vote, and the Chairman of the National Security Council (MGK), Kenan Evren, also assumed the role of President.[109] The 1982 Constitution was developed based on a consensus that emphasized the supremacy of the state while limiting individual rights. The second chamber established by the 1961 Constitution, known as the "Senate," was eliminated. It was determined that the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye (TBMM) would comprise 400 members elected through general suffrage, with a legislative term of five years. The 1982 Constitution represented Türkiye's most extensive and detailed constitutional framework to that time. It has been the focus of numerous discussions and has undergone amendments 19 times through 2023.[110] The primary critique of the constitution is that it was formulated not by an elected Parliament but by the military institution, the MGK, under exceptional circumstances subsequent to a coup. Moreover, as the constitution was drafted during the MGK's governance, the fundamental laws of the state were not delegated to the TBMM. As a result, the constitution frequently faces criticism for prioritizing the reinforcement of authority over the safeguarding and advancement of freedom and democracy, in alignment with constitutional procedures. The intricate framework of the 1982 Constitution, which seeks to address almost all conceivable matters, has faced criticism for potentially compromising judicial independence, particularly regarding the standing of the Supreme Military Council (YAŞ), the resolutions of the High Council of Judges and Prosecutors (HSYK), and presidential decrees. Conversely, in an effort to regulate universities—which experienced considerable unrest prior to September 12—the administrative autonomy of these institutions was eliminated by the Higher Education Law (YÖK) promulgated on October 26, 1981, thereby subordinating universities to the authority of YÖK.[111]

The return to civilian political rule occurred with the General Parliamentary Elections held on November 6, 1983. The Motherland Party (ANAP) emerged as the leading party with 45.15% of the vote.[112] In collaboration with ANAP leader Turgut Özal, a significant transition was initiated in the nation. Özal asserted that his po-

[109] Mehmet Semih Gemalmaz, "12 Eylül Rejimi", *Cumhuriyet Dönemi Türkiye Ansiklopedisi*, C.XIV, p.974-998.

[110] https://www5.tbmm.gov.tr/yayinlar/2021/TC_Anayasasi_ve_TBMM_Ic_Tuzugu.pdf, [Date of access 26.06.2024].

[111] *Türkiye Yükseköğretim Sistemi*, YÖK Publications, Ankara 2021, p.9-10.

[112] https://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/arsiv/18221_1.pdf [Date of Access 02.06.2024].



litical party was neither positioned on the right nor the left but rather encompassed all political orientations that preceded the 1980 coup; the party embodied concepts of change, liberalization, and a free-market economy in Türkiye. The policies implemented by the ANAP government and Özal's perspectives epitomized the emergence of a new Türkiye.[113] On August 15, 1984, the separatist terrorist group initiated its operations in the districts of Eruh and Şemdinli. These occurrences marked the commencement of the separatist terrorist movement that would dominate Türkiye's agenda for an extended period.[114]

On November 29, 1987, during the initial general elections in Türkiye, formerly prohibited party leaders Süleyman Demirel, Bülent Ecevit, Necmettin Erbakan, and Alparslan Türkeş re-entered the political arena.[115] Subsequent to the elections, the second Özal Government was established, which maintained its authority until November 9, 1989. In local elections, the Social Democratic Populist Party (SHP) established itself as the dominant party, securing mayoral positions in 39 provinces, including Istanbul, Ankara, and Izmir. On a national scale, the ANAP obtained 570 municipalities, whereas the SHP secured 652 municipalities with 28% of the electorate, and the True Path Party (DYP) attained 550 municipalities with 25% of the vote.[116] ANAP's position as the third party in terms of vote share indicated a rapid decline in voter support compared to the previous election. On October 31, 1989, as Evren's presidential term concluded, Özal relinquished his leadership role within ANAP and was subsequently elected as the 8th President of Türkiye.

The 1990s: An Era of Coalitions

In the 1990s, the country's internal political landscape was marked by instability, economic crises, and the ongoing issue of terrorism, alongside worker and student protests, corruption, and political scandals. Terrorist attacks and actions by illegal leftist organizations, tumultuous Nevruz celebrations, various protests, mining disasters, the Sivas massacre, the Susurluk scandal, and the İSKİ and Telekulak scandals were some of the notable incidents during this decade.[117] The national

[113] *Yakın Dostlarının Dilinden Turgut Özal'ın Dış Politikasını Anlamak*, ed. Erkan Ertosun, Turgut Özal Üniversitesi Publications, Ankara 2015, p.116.

[114] Metin Heper, *Devlet ve Kürtler,* Doğan Kitap, Istanbul 2010, p.210.

[115] *Halk Oylaması Sonuçları 2007,1988,1987,1982,1961*, T.C. Başbakanlık Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu Publications, Ankara 2008, p.112.

[116] https://www.ysk.gov.tr/doc/dosyalar/1989Mahalli-Tuik.pdf, [Date of Access 26.06.2024].

[117] Odabaşı, *op. cit*.

elections originally planned for November 1992 were advanced by a year. In these elections, alongside the True Path Party (DYP), the Social Democratic Populist Party (SHP), the Motherland Party (ANAP), the Welfare Party (RP), and the Democratic Left Party (DSP), the People's Labor Party (HEP), established in 1990 with an ethnic nationalist ideology, participated by running on SHP lists, whereas the Nationalist Labor Party (MÇP) and the Reformist Democracy Party (IDP) ran on lists provided by the RP.[118] The general elections held on October 20, 1991, didn't result in a single-party majority, marking the return of coalition governments in Turkish political history.[119] The DYP-SHP Coalition Government, with Demirel serving as Prime Minister and Erdal İnönü as Deputy Prime Minister, was in power from November 20, 1991, to June 25, 1993. After the unexpected passing of President Turgut Özal on April 17, 1993, Demirel stepped down as prime minister and leader of the DYP and was subsequently elected as the 9th President of Türkiye on May 16, 1993. Tansu Çiller assumed the position of Prime Minister in Türkiye, becoming the first woman to hold the role in the nation's history.

On October 27, 1995, in the wake of the determination to hold early general elections, the ephemeral ANAP-DYP Coalition Government (ANAYOL), which existed for a mere three months, was formed on March 3, 1996. Shortly subsequent to the dissolution of the ANAYOL government on June 28, 1996, the REFAHYOL government was established, with RP Party Leader Erbakan assuming the role of Prime Minister and Tansu Çiller serving as Deputy Prime Minister. Owing to RP's nationalist and religiously conservative nature intricately linked to Islamic identity, bias against the party induced a reluctance among civilian and military bureaucracies to engage in proactive cooperation with the government. Erbakan's trip to Libya from October 4-6, 1996, the controversy surrounding the Atatürk Monument in Sultanbeyli, the iftar organized for religious dignitaries at the Prime Ministry in January 1997, and the visuals from the "Jerusalem Night" further exacerbated negative perceptions of the RP. On February 28, 1997, the National Security Council (MGK) assembled with the focus on "reactionary activities and countermeasures," culminating in the formulation of 18 resolutions. On May 21, 1997, the Chief Public Prosecutor of the Supreme Court initiated a case before the Constitutional Court seeking the dissolution of the RP (Refah Partisi) on the grounds that it had become

[118] Aytekin Ersal, "Koalisyon Dönemi (1991-2002)", *Modern Türkiye Tarihi*, ed. Süleyman Beyoğlu-Ali Satan, Marmara Üniversitesi Publications, Istanbul 2014, p.364.

[119] Hakan Uzun, "Koalisyonlar Dönemi", *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Tarihi 3,* s.365, https://atam.gov.tr/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/TURKIYE-CUMHURIYETI-TARIHI-3b.pdf, [Date of access 26.06.2024].



a focal point for illegal activities and that certain members were engaged in efforts aimed at undermining the secular framework. Despite having served for less than two years, Erbakan tendered his resignation to President Demirel on June 18, 1997, with the intent of transferring the Prime Ministry to the DYP (Demokrat Parti) amidst sustained pressure, a period subsequently referred to as the "post-modern coup."[120]

After the end of REFAHYOL rule, the ANASOL-D Government, composed of a coalition of the ANAP, DSP, and DTP, was inaugurated on June 30, 1997. The government persisted in executing the resolutions of February 28 through initiatives including mandatory and continuous eight-year primary education, the application of a coefficient for vocational high schools in university entrance examinations, and the removal of officers and non-commissioned officers. In the general elections conducted on April 18, 1999, five political parties exceeded the 10% electoral threshold, whereas the Republican People's Party (CHP) was notably excluded from the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye (TBMM) for the first time in its historical trajectory. The Democratic Left Party (DSP) ascended to the position of the dominant party, while the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), which had not met the electoral threshold in the prior election, significantly increased its vote share, nearly doubling it to become the second largest party. On May 28, 1999, the ANASOL-M coalition government was established by the DSP, MHP, and ANAP, signifying the MHP's return to governmental involvement after a 21-year hiatus. Nevertheless, the coalition disintegrated in about three years, culminating in a premature election on November 3, 2002.[121] The Justice and Development Party (AKP), founded in 2001 under the leadership of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, gained 34.5% of the vote, achieving single-party rule and has been in power ever since.

The Journey from the 28 February to 2002 Elections

During the 1990s, Türkiye was governed by transient coalition administrations, which resulted in political and economic instability. The incapacity of ineffective governments to address the nation's issues commenced to foster a perception of a "democracy incapable of governing." Reinforced by this viewpoint, the "military bureaucracy" demonstrated an increased readiness and assertiveness in engaging with civilian political matters. Despite the acceptance and implementation

[120] Mustafa Erdoğan, *28 Şubat Günlüğü Postmodern Darbenin Anatomisi*, Orion Books, Ankara 2012; Hulki Cevizoğlu, *Generalinden 28 Şubat İtirafi "Postmodern Darbe",* Deniz Kabuğu Publications, 2001.

[121] Satan, Odabaşı, *op.cit.,* p.570-571.

of the National Security Council's (MGK) decisions of February 28, 1997, by the REFAHYOL Government, Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan was forced to resign.

In the course of the February 28 process, the Welfare Party (Refah Partisi) was prohibited by the Constitutional Court on January 16, 1998, resulting in a five-year political ban for its leader, Necmettin Erbakan, along with six additional party executives. The Virtue Party (Fazilet Partisi) was founded as the heir to the Welfare Party. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, at the time serving as the Mayor of Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, received a prison sentence on December 12, 1997, as a result of a poem he recited in Siirt, which subsequently led to the cessation of his mayoral responsibilities.[122] During the Virtue Party's inaugural Ordinary Congress on May 14, 2000, Erbakan faced a prohibition while Erdoğan was incarcerated. In the context of party leadership, Erbakan endorsed Recai Kutan, whereas Erdoğan advocated for Abdullah Gül. Ultimately, Recai Kutan prevailed in the congress election. On June 22, 2001, the Constitutional Court dissolved the Virtue Party, prompting reformists led by Erdoğan to separate from the Milli Görüş movement. Rather than aligning with Erbakan's faction, which established the Felicity Party (Saadet Partisi) on July 20, 2001, they opted to establish the Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, AKP) on August 14, 2001. Identifying as conservative-democratic, the AKP achieved a significant victory in the snap general elections held on November 3, 2002, obtaining 34% of the vote and 363 parliamentary seats, thus establishing a single-party government. The Republican People's Party (CHP) transitioned into the role of opposition, garnering 19% of the electorate's vote. Erdoğan, who was subject to a political ban, was ineligible to participate in this election. Abdullah Gül established the government, and a subsequent legal amendment repealed Erdoğan's political prohibition. Erdoğan entered parliament as a deputy after the re-conducted elections in Siirt and assumed the role of prime minister on March 12, 2003.

Türkiye's Structural Transformation

Following the Justice and Development Party's (AKP) acquisition of single-party governance, structural adjustment reforms—some of which commenced under the guidance of Kemal Derviş post the 2001 economic crisis—were amplified and maintained. State-owned economic enterprises underwent privatization, and a rigorous fiscal discipline program was instituted. Gross national product, per

[122] https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/turkiye#3-2001-sonrasi



capita national income, production, employment, and foreign direct investment all experienced growth. Concurrently, budget deficits, interest rates, and inflation rates declined. In an effort to implement economic stabilization policies, six zeros were eliminated from the Turkish lira on January 1, 2005.[123]

The implementation of the State of Emergency (OHAL), commencing on July 19, 1987, was not prolonged and concluded on November 30, 2002. The State Security Courts, established in 1983 as a consequence of the coup, were dismantled. As military personnel started to be prosecuted in civilian courts for offenses beyond military transgressions, the practice of adjudicating civilians in military tribunals was ceased. Individuals were conferred the prerogative to petition the Constitutional Court on an individual basis concerning violations of human rights. Via the "probation" regulation, individuals incarcerated for minor offenses were permitted to fulfill their sentences outside of a correctional facility. To mitigate human rights violations, a dedicated action plan aligned with the European Convention on Human Rights was developed and implemented.[124]

The reforms implemented by the AK Party concerning the diminution of the military's involvement in politics, encompassing harmonization packages presented during the EU accession process, as well as other laws and constitutional amendments, may be classified as follows: regulations designed to decrease the military's influence in shaping security policy and to eradicate its interventions in political affairs; regulations focusing on institutions tasked with civilian oversight to enhance financial transparency within the military; alterations aimed at limiting the jurisdiction of military courts and abolishing duality in the judiciary; and amendments pertaining to the restriction or transfer of the Armed Forces' authority in the domain of internal security.

The tangible expressions and attributes of the reforms designed to curtail the military's involvement in politics, restrict its sphere of authority, and enhance civilian oversight of security forces—as delineated in the four categories—can be summarized as follows: In 2001, the constitutional amendment to Article 118 introduced three significant innovations regarding the National Security Council (MGK). Firstly, through the incorporation of Deputy Prime Ministers and the Minister of Justice to the Council, a distinct civilian majority was established within its membership. Secondly, it was clearly indicated that the determinations of the Council are consultative

123 https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/turkiye#3-2001-sonrasi [Date of Access 17.02.2025].

124 Tahsin Güler, *Ak Parti İktidarları Döneminde Türkiye'de Siyaset-Bürokrasi İlişkisi (2002-2012)*, (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis), Sakarya Üniversitesi SBE, Sakarya 2015, p.215.

in nature. Third, the statement indicating that the Council's decisions were "primarily considered" by the Council of Ministers was altered to "evaluated." In the 7th Harmonization Package enacted in 2003, the authority to adjudicate the "offense of discouraging military service" as defined by Article 58 of the Military Penal Code was devolved to civilian courts. Consequently, military tribunals were deprived of the jurisdiction to adjudicate cases involving civilians for this specific offense. The responsibilities of the MGK were restructured with specific constraints placed on its authority, and the MGK Secretariat's capacity to oversee and regulate the Council's resolutions was eliminated. The opportunity for civilians to assume the role of MGK Secretary-General was established, and it was mandated that the MGK, which formerly met on a monthly basis, would convene every two months. The practice of trying civilians in military tribunals in times of peace was eliminated. In 2004, through the 8th Harmonization Package, the authority of the General Staff to appoint members to the Higher Education Council and the provision enabling the MGK Secretariat to nominate candidates for the Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTÜK) were rescinded. In 2004, the initial measure was implemented to eliminate confidentiality surrounding military expenditures via an amendment to Article 160 of the Constitution. Subsequently, in December 2010, following the constitutional amendment of 2010, the new Court of Accounts Law No. 6085 was enacted, which included stipulations that military expenditures would also be subject to auditing on behalf of the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye (TBMM). The EMASYA protocol, which conferred authority upon the military to engage in social occurrences, was revoked. In 2006, 65 provisions pertaining to military jurisprudence were revised.

The 2010 constitutional amendment inserted the clause "Nevertheless, judicial appeal is permissible for all decisions of the High Military Council (YAŞ) with the exception of those pertaining to promotional procedures and retirement owing to insufficient positions" into the second paragraph of Article 125 of the 1982 Constitution, which formerly stated that "decisions rendered by the High Military Council are not subject to judicial scrutiny." The 2010 amendment further broadened the category of individuals subject to trial by the Constitutional Court, acting as the Supreme Court, to encompass the Chief of the General Staff, Commanders of the Land, Naval, and Air Forces, and the General Commander of the Gendarmerie. Moreover, the transitional Article 15 of the 1982 Constitution—which precluded judicial review of the actions of individuals who executed the coup of 12 September 1980 and wielded legislative and executive authority until the restoration of civilian governance—was repealed, thereby facilitating the potential accountability of those responsible for the coup in judicial proceedings. Finally, the 2010 constitutional



amendment secured the stipulation that military courts should exclusively address disciplinary infractions committed by military personnel—a measure considered essential by legal scholars for the cessation of military governance—by modifying Article 145 of the Constitution.[125]

The 27 April E-Memorandum

For the presidential election anticipated in April 2007, the AK Party endorsed Abdullah Gül as its nominee. During the night of April 27 to April 28, when the initial round of voting occurred, the announcement disseminated on the Chief of General Staff's website—referred to as the "e-memorandum"—intensified political tensions. The AK Party issued a robust response, underscoring that the aforementioned statement was specifically aimed at them. This position signified a significant advancement in the institutionalization of Turkish democracy and the reduction of military oversight. Nevertheless, subsequent to an application submitted by the Republican People's Party (CHP), the Constitutional Court examined the matter and rendered an interpretation that the quorum required for the presidential election in the Grand National Assembly (TBMM) was 367 members. It determined that as the requisite quorum was not attained, the vote was rendered invalid. Thereafter, the government opted to conduct elections prior to their scheduled date. In the July elections of the same year, the AK Party augmented its vote share and maintained its position as the dominant party with 47%. Subsequent to a constitutional amendment enabling the direct election of the president by the populace, Abdullah Gül was inaugurated as the eleventh president in the presidential election held in August.[126]

On March 14, 2008, the Chief Public Prosecutor of the Court of Appeal drafted an indictment aimed at the dissolution of the AK Party, asserting that it had evolved into the "central hub for activities antithetical to secularism," and subsequently presented it to the Constitutional Court. In its judgment rendered on July 30, the Constitutional Court did not mandate the permanent dissolution of the party, instead, it directed the curtailment of 50% of the state treasury funds designated for the party.

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125 Tahsin Güler, *Ak Parti İktidarları Döneminde Türkiye'de Siyaset-Bürokrasi İlişkisi (2002-2012)*, (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis), Sakarya Üniversitesi SBE, Sakarya 2015 p.248-250.

126 Abdulvahap Akıncı, "Siyaset ve Demokrasi", *Türkiye'nin 100 Yıllık Birikimi İkibinli Yıllarda Türkiye*, ed. Yusuf Bayraktutan, Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi Pub. Ankara 2004, p.43-54, 60-62.

In the general elections conducted in June 2011, the AK Party attained a vote share of 49.8% and obtained a third successive term in government.[127]

Upon the conclusion of President Abdullah Gül's term, Erdoğan was elected president, securing 51% of the vote. Ahmet Davutoğlu, who held the position of foreign minister in Erdoğan's cabinet, subsequently assumed the role of prime minister and leader of the AK Party. In the general elections conducted on June 7, 2015, the AK Party garnered 40.8% of the vote and, for the first time, did not achieve a parliamentary majority necessary to establish a single-party government. As a result of unsuccessful coalition negotiations, a subsequent election was conducted on November 1, 2015, in which the AK Party re-established single-party governance by securing 49.5% of the vote. Prime Minister Davutoğlu relinquished all his positions in May 2016. Binali Yıldırım was elected as the leader of the AK Party and assumed the role of Prime Minister thereafter. Upon the conclusion of President Abdullah Gül's term, Erdoğan was elected president, securing 51% of the vote. Ahmet Davutoğlu, who held the position of foreign minister in Erdoğan's cabinet, subsequently assumed the role of prime minister and leader of the AK Party. In the general elections conducted on June 7, 2015, the AK Party garnered 40.8% of the vote and, for the first time, did not achieve a parliamentary majority necessary to establish a single-party government. As a result of unsuccessful coalition negotiations, a subsequent election was conducted on November 1, 2015, in which the AK Party reestablished single-party governance by securing 49.5% of the vote. Prime Minister Davutoğlu relinquished all his positions in May 2016. Binali Yıldırım was elected as the leader of the AK Party and subsequently assumed the role of Prime Minister.

The 15th July Coup Attempt

On July 15, 2016, forces within the FETÖ terrorist organization, integrated at wide-ranging levels within the Armed Forces, attempted to execute a coup d'état. The Grand National Assembly of Turkey and the Presidential Complex in Beştepe were bombed, and an assassination attempt was directed at President Erdoğan. In accordance with President Erdoğan's appeal, citizens mobilized in public spaces and opposed the coup perpetrators. In total, 252 individuals were martyered, while over 2,000 sustained injuries. The coup attempt was successfully obstructed by the courageous opposition of the populace. Following the coup attempt that emerged as the most violent in the Republic's history, a national state of emergency was

[127] https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/turkiye#3-2001-sonrasi.



implemented. Individuals associated with or connected to the terrorist organization were removed from public service, and legal proceedings began.[128]

The Transition to Presidential Government System

The extensively debated presidential system in Türkiye became viable in the political environment that developed after the July 15, 2016 coup attempt, particularly as a result of the reconciliation between the AK Party and the MHP. The constitutional referendum conducted on April 16, 2017, resulted in a notable transformation of Türkiye's governance system; the parliamentary system was eliminated, and the Presidential Government System, grounded in the presidential model, was implemented. The position of Prime Minister was eliminated, the number of seats in the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye was augmented to 600, and provisions were established to allow the President to become a member or even the leader of a political party. Furthermore, alterations in the organizational framework of the Council of Judges and Prosecutors were implemented.[129] In the presidential elections held in 2018, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan received 52.5% of the vote and became the first elected president under the new Presidential Government System.

The COVID-19 pandemic, which had devasatating effects globally, was initially identified in Türkiye in March 2020 and quickly spread across the nation. As of March 2023, the aggregate number of confirmed cases in Türkiye surpassed seventeen million, and tragically, over one hundred thousand individuals died as a result of the pandemic. On February 6, 2023, two significant earthquakes occurred in the Kahramanmaraş region at an interval of nine hours, resulting in extensive damage across ten adjacent provinces. Official statistics indicate that over fifty thousand structures either collapsed or were designated for immediate demolition, while roughly two hundred thousand buildings sustained significant damage. The earthquakes resulted in the deaths of over fifty thousand people and injured more than one hundred thousand. Additionally, more than half a million people were evacuated from the affected region. A significant legislative amendment implemented in 2022 lowered the electoral threshold from 10% to 7%. In the initial round of the second

[128] Abdulvahap Akıncı, "Siyaset ve Demokrasi", Türkiye'nin 100 Yıllık Birikimi İkibinli Yıllarda Türkiye, ed. Yusuf Bayraktutan, Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi publications, Ankara 2004, p.66-68.

[129] Abdulvahap Akıncı, "Siyaset ve Demokrasi", Türkiye'nin 100 Yıllık Birikimi İkibinli Yıllarda Türkiye, ed. Yusuf Bayraktutan, Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi Publications, Ankara 2004, p.68-69; https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/turkiye#3-2001-sonrasi.

presidential election conducted under the Presidential Government System on May 14, 2023, none of the candidates obtained the requisite majority of votes. In the parliamentary elections conducted concurrently, the AK Party emerged as the predominant party; however, it attained an absolute majority in the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye solely through the support of the People's Alliance. The presidential election was concluded in the second round, conducted on May 28, 2023, wherein Recep Tayyip Erdoğan secured a victory with 52.2% of the vote.

From the 100th Anniversary of the Republic to the Century of Türkiye

Having won seven consecutive general elections since 2002, the AK Party has achieved unprecedented in the history of Turkish democracy.[130] During the course of almost 25 years, Türkiye has experienced significant transformations in both its internal and external policies. During its formative years, the AK Party actively pursued accelerated efforts towards accession to the European Union, enacting structural reforms in Türkiye within the context of EU harmonization. Nevertheless, the inability of the EU to formulate a unified policy supporting Türkiye's membership made accession no longer a feasible expectation for Türkiye, resulting in the diversification of the AK Party's foreign policy. During this time, Türkiye attained observer status within the African Union in 2005 and was subsequently promoted to the status of strategic partner in 2008. In 2006, it further attained the status of a permanent observer within the Arab League. Subsequent to engagement initiatives directed towards South America and Asia, the count of Turkish diplomatic missions abroad rose to 253. Türkiye significantly contributed to supporting Azerbaijan in its efforts to liberate Karabakh from Armenian occupation. Subsequent to the Karabakh victory, the Organization of Turkic States underwent restructuring and transformed into a more proactive entity. Adopting a neutral position in the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, Türkiye engaged in discussions with both parties and supported the uninterrupted exportation of Ukrainian grain to international markets. It additionally presumed a mediating function between Russia and Ukraine. In reaction to the civil conflicts in Iraq and Syria, Türkiye has facilitated the entry of at-risk civilian populations and has provided refuge to millions of individuals over an extended period.

Following its exclusion from the F-35 fighter jet program by the United States, Türkiye commenced the development of its own combat aircraft. The initial

[130] https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/politika/ak-partinin-secim-karnesi/2897999 [Date of Access 03.03.2025].



indigenously manufactured and nationally designed fighter aircraft, designated KAAN, successfully conducted its inaugural test flight in February 2024. As stated by Turkish Aerospace Industries (TUSAŞ), it is anticipated that this inaugural national combat jet will begin to supersede the F-16s in the Turkish Air Force starting in the 2030s. Concurrently, Türkiye's public and private sector enterprises have successfully concluded test flights of unmanned combat aircraft prototypes and are advancing with preparations for large-scale production. The introduction of advanced aircraft such as Kızılelma and ANKA has markedly enhanced public interest, especially among young individuals, thereby promoting enthusiasm for these emerging sectors and facilitating the emergence of a "Teknofest generation." Furthermore, the past two decades have seen significant progress in infrastructure, transportation, and communication throughout the nation.

In the evolving landscape of worldwide disorder, Türkiye, under the auspices of its "Century of Türkiye" vision, is endeavoring to convert its highly educated youth into a strategic asset by advancing its capabilities in science and technology. The nation aspires to evolve into a producer of armaments for its own defense—instead of relying on purchases—and possesses the ability to export these systems to its allies and partners free from restrictions or embargoes. This novel orientation is promoting a renewed synergy, facilitating the formation of new alliances and strategic partnerships.

The genocide in Gaza, coupled with the passivity of the United Nations, international organizations, and nations that have traditionally emphasized their role in offering political, intellectual, and moral guidance to humanity, has intensified interest in President Erdoğan's proclamation that "The world is larger than five" and his aspiration for a more equitable world. In the framework of Türkiye's New Century, it is anticipated that Türkiye will endeavor to form multifaceted alliances with marginalized populations globally, with the overarching objective of fostering a more equitable international order.

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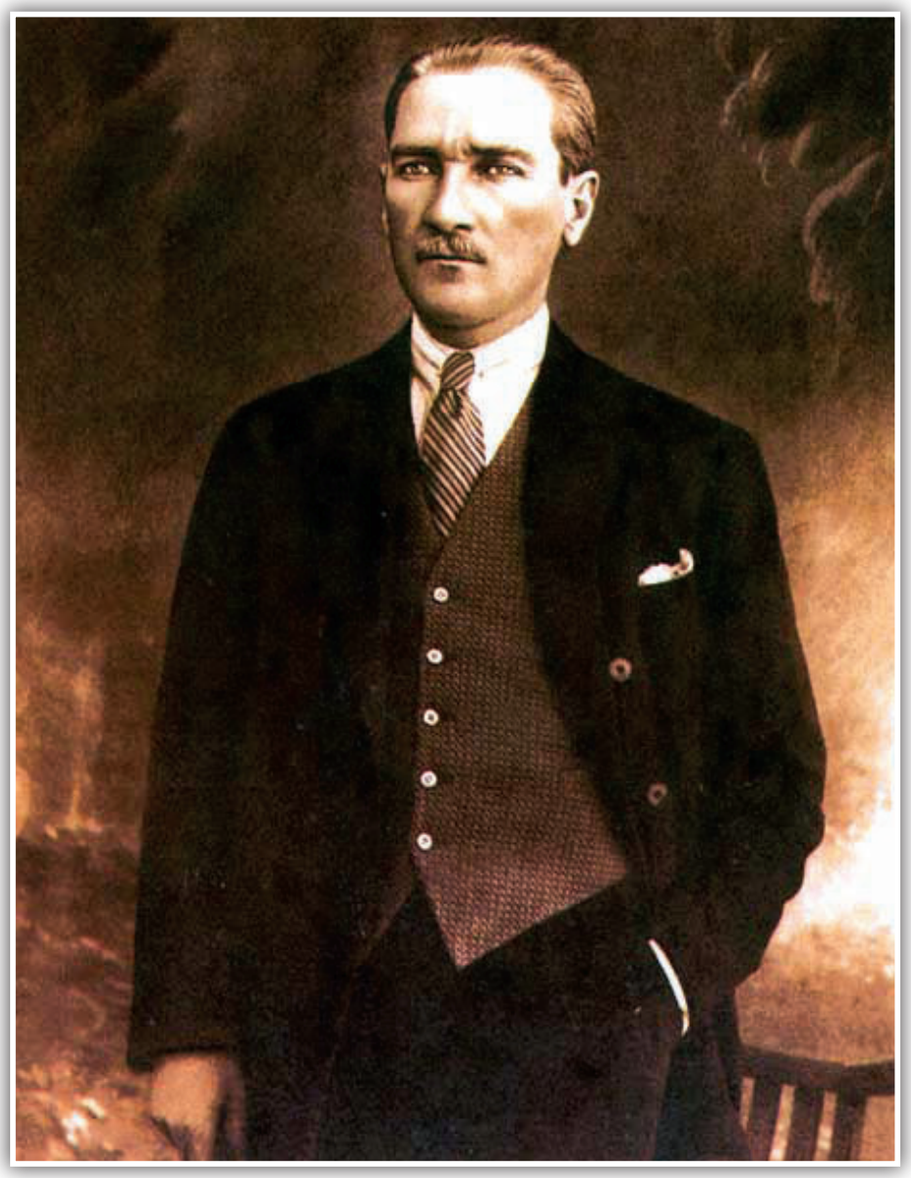


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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Portrait of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder and first President of the Republic of Türkiye



Source: https://www.ktb.gov.tr/TR-96577/ataturk-portreleri.html

Annex 2: Presidents of the Republic of Türkiye



Source: https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/info/%C4%B0nfografik/41918

Appendix 3: Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the 12th and current President of the Republic of Türkiye



Source: https://tccb.gov.tr/receptayyiperdogan/

Appendix 4: Prime Ministers of the Republic of Türkiye



Source: https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/turkiye/inonuden-yildirima-94-yilda-27-basbakan/1202806