

TURKIC HISTORY

PART I – Introduction

Central Asia : Geography

Introduction

The Geographical setting. The region comprises an area from the Volga-Ural zone to the northern borderlands of China. It includes the present day states of Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, as well as the Tatarstan and Bashqortostan republics and western and southern Siberia in the Russian Federation, Mongolia as well as the Inner Mongolia and Xinjiang (Eastern Turkestan) autonomous regions in the People's Republic of China.

Ecology. It is an area of striking ecological contrasts, frigid winters, scorching summers, oases, deserts, steppes, forest-steppe and the taiga of the northlands. Far from any oceans, it receives, overall, little precipitation. Erosion and desiccation are an ongoing problem. Much of the region, which historically, has also comprised parts of the North Caucasus, southern Russia and Ukraine, consists of steppe lands extending from the forests of Manchuria to the Hungarian Plain.

Rivers. The river systems are marked by inland drainage. Rivers, such as the Amu Darya, Syr Darya, Talas, Ili, Tarim as well as those of Siberia (Ob'-Irtys, Yenisei and Lena) have never been important routes of communication. The overflow of some, such as the Amur Darya (Oxus) allows for agriculture as do the oases and elaborate irrigations systems that have been built to retain the runoff from the snow-covered mountaintops.

Readings

D. Sinor (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Early Inner Asia*, 1-40.

D. Christian, *A History of Russia, Central Asia and Mongolia*, xv-xxiii, 3-20.

Frye, *The Heritage of Central Asia*, 13-27

Recommended

Owen Lattimore, *The Inner Asian Frontiers of China*

Questions

1. What are the definitions of Central Asia and why do they differ?
2. What role has geography and climate played in shaping the dynamics of Central Asian history? Can we speak of geographical determinism?

Central Asia : Languages

Introduction

The ethno-linguistic dimensions of Central Asia. The peoples of Central Asia were formed through a complex process of ethno-linguistic layering, not unique to the region. A number of ethnonyms still used by modern Central Asians can be found in antiquity or in the Middle Ages. In some instances there is a direct line of continuity; in others, the relationship is much more complex, recent or invented to varying degrees. Modern empires have engaged in nation-building here, sometimes reviving ethnonyms and "creating" peoples for political purposes.

Language Families. The peoples of Central Asia are divided historically and today into a number of *language families*: Uralic (in the northwest), Indo-European (in the south-southwest), Altaic (in the center and east, with populations in northwestern and northeastern China and with possible, but much-debated connections to the peoples of Korea and Japan). In addition, there are a number of language isolates, often termed "Paleo-Siberian": Chukchi-Kamchatkan, Yukaghir (the sole survivor of a previously more numerous group which may have been related to Uralic), Kettic (the only survivor of the Yeniseian group), Gilyak (in Sakhalin Island) and various Eskimo-Aleut languages. With the exception of Indo-European all have problematic internal relations, i.e. it is not clear (or satisfactorily proved) how the different components relate to one another.

Indo-European. According to the most widely held theory, the Indo-European linguistic community occupied a territory, about 6-7000 years ago, extending from the Eastern European plains to the Caspian sea. By 3000-2500 BCE, this linguistic community broke up, ultimately expanding over regions from South Asia to the British Isles. Of the Indo-European languages, Tokharian (now extinct) and the various Iranian languages have played the greatest role in ancient and medieval Central Asia.

Altaic. Altaic presents a number of problems. The debate is ongoing as to whether the Altaic languages are genetically related or share a number of features as the result of long periods of interaction and borrowing. The presumed Altaic "ancient homeland" (*Urheimat*, *Anayurdu*) may be placed in southern Siberia, Mongolia and Manchuria. Those who argue for a genetic relationship (which would, for some scholars, include the linguistic ancestors of Korean and Japanese) date the break up of the Altaic linguistic community to the 6th millennium BCE, at which time it divided into three branches: Turko-Mongolic, Manchu-Tungusic and Korean-Japanese. Much of this remains controversial. For our purposes we can note that Turkic peoples are clearly in evidence by the late 1st millennium BCE-early 1st millennium CE.

Writing systems. By the early 8th century CE (and probably earlier) Turkic was a written language with its own script system (the runiform script). Mongolic was present in a number of varieties by this time, but it is only with the rise of Chinggis Khan's Empire (13th century) that Mongol was written down in an alphabet borrowed from the Turkic world and ultimately going back through the Soghdians to the Aramaic scripts of the Middle East. The Para-Mongolic Qitan language was written by the Qitan/Liao (916-1125) in two writing systems that derive but are quite distinct from Chinese.

Readings

Frye, *The Heritage of Central Asia*, 31-49

Recommended:

P.B. Golden, *Introduction to the History of the Turkic Peoples*, 15-38

J.P. Mallory and D.Q. Adams, *The Oxford Introduction to Proto-Indo-European and the Proto-Indo-European World*. Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press, 2006.

J. Janhunen, *Manchuria. An Ethnic History*, 237-256.

A. Vovin, "The End of the Altaic Controversy" *Central Asiatic Journal*, 49/1 (2005), pp.71-132.

Questions

1. Define and trace the movements of the different language groups and their interactions.
2. Discuss the Altaic Theory.
3. Discuss the writing systems employed by Central Asian peoples. What are the external influences?

PART II – ANCIENT CENTRAL ASIA

Pre-history of Central Asia

Introduction

The earliest settlements. The peoples of Central Asia were largely either nomads or dwellers of oasis-riverine agricultural zones. These are the two major ecological options - in addition to the hunting-gathering economy of the forest belt and taiga, which supported much smaller populations. The history of Central Asia, which has played such an important role in World History, has been shaped by these peculiarities of ecology. Those steppe peoples who were closest to sedentary society and had the most interaction with it, were also the ones that developed the largest populations. Frontiers are important zones, the scenes of profound interactions between steppe and sown. This was where history was made.

The origins of nomadism. The chronology of the origins of nomadism and whether it began in one place (the western Eurasian steppes) or had multiple points of origin remain debated questions. It has become increasingly clear that pastoral nomadism was an adaptation by stock-raising, settled agriculturalists, who advanced into the steppe, seeking greater pastures. Pastoral nomadism provided great personal mobility as well as a sense of freedom that most settled agricultural workers did not have. It could also generate wealth through the sale of cattle and goods derived from them – as well as by raiding, a resource vouchsafed by nomads' control of equine power.

Interaction of nomads and settled peoples. All of this involved *interaction with sedentary society*, a major theme of Central Asian history. Some would argue that this was the main catalyst for the development of confederations and states among the nomads.

Urban developments. Although we are most familiar with cities such as Bukhara and Samarqand, which became important points on the "Silk Road" and remained continuously inhabited since antiquity, archaeological discoveries indicate that there were substantial proto-urban and urban developments in ancient Central Asia. These were founded by Iranian nomads that settled in water-accessible areas by at least 500 BCE (often claiming far older roots) – and perhaps by other groupings whose ethno-linguistic affiliations are

unclear. Soviet archaeologists termed the region from the Urals to western Siberia "the country of towns" dating to the late 2nd and early 1st millennia BCE because of the numerous fortified settlements unearthed there.

Readings

- A.M. Khazanov, *Nomads and the Outside World*
T.J. Barfield, *The Perilous Frontier*, 1-31
D. Christian, *A History of Russia, Central Asia and Mongolia*, 21-119
R.N. Frye, *The Heritage of Central Asia*, 53-63.
P.B. Golden, *Central Asia in World History*, 9-20
D. Sinor (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Early Inner Asia*, 41-96

Recommended:

- C.I. Beckwith, *Empires of the Silk Road*, xxi-xxv, 320-362
B. Lewis, *Bukhara. The Medieval Achievement*, 3-13

Questions

1. "The pure nomad is a poor nomad." Discuss.
2. What is the nomadic cycle?
3. What is the nature of nomadic contact with the sedentary world? Discuss the raid or trade thesis.
4. Are polities that arise in the nomadic world primary or secondary formations? What role does interaction with sedentary society play in the creation of states in the steppe zone?
5. Were the nomads "barbarians"?
6. Discuss the peoples of Pre-historic Central Asia
7. Discuss the rise of cities in Central Asia

The Rise of Polities

Introduction

The rise of the first tribal confederations and early states: The Iranian tribes.

The Iranian peoples derived from the Indo-Aryan/Indo-Iranian linguistic community within Indo-European. Loanwords attest to their early contacts with Uralic and Altaic peoples. The Iranians divided into three groupings: two remained in Central Asia either as pastoral nomads in the steppe where they were loosely organized into various tribal confederations (Scythian-Saka and others) that extended from Siberia and Mongolia to Ukraine, or those that settled and founded city-states in the oases and riverbanks of Western and Eastern Turkestan. The third grouping entered Iran ca. 1500-1000 BCE, becoming the ancestors of the Persians, Kurds and other Iranian-speaking peoples of the Middle East.

Zoroastrianism. Zoroaster (dates uncertain, ca.1200 BCE? ca. 600 BCE?) reformed and preached a new form of their traditional religious notions (that shared elements with Indic beliefs). He is thought to have done this in the "expanse of the Aryans" (*âryânâm vaêjô*), probably to be located in Central Asia. The Scythian-Saka nomads appear to have been less impacted by the "new" religion. They were in contact with the Persian Achaemenid Empire (556-330 BCE), which had some success in bringing them under Persian political subordination.

Alexander the Great in Central Asia. Alexander the Great's conquest of Persia (330) was quickly followed by the subjugation of much of Iranian Central Asia: Khwârazm (western Uzbekistan), Soghdia (central Uzbekistan and parts of Tajikistan) and Bactria (modern Afghanistan).

Graeco-Bactria. After Alexander's death (323), a Graeco-Bactrian state formed (mid-3rd century BCE), which bequeathed elements of its Hellenistic culture to successor states. Graeco-Bactria was destroyed ca. 128 BCE by the Yuezhi and other tribes coming from the east set in motion by the rise of the Xiongnu/Asian Hun state.

Readings

T.J. Barfield, *The Perilous Frontier*, 32-84

D. Christian, *A History of Russia, Central Asia and Mongolia*, 121-208

R.N. Frye, *The Heritage of Central Asia*, 65-130.

P.B. Golden, *Central Asia in World History*, 21-31

D. Sinor (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Early Inner Asia*, 97-117

Questions

1. Discuss Zoroastrianism
2. What was the culture of the Scythian-Saka world?
3. What was the impact of Hellenism in Central Asia after Alexander's conquest?

Xiongnu / Huns / Successors

Introduction

The Xiongnu/Asian Hun state (late 3rd century BCE-middle 2nd century CE). Of still undetermined ethno-linguistic affiliations, the Xiongnu became the dominant power in steppe Central Asia and a trading partner and often foe of Han China. The latter sought to manipulate the relationship by alternately offering or withholding trading rights. Xiongnu-Chinese warfare led to the westward migration of some of the subject peoples of the Xiongnu, these included Turkic peoples. The political and military traditions of the Xiongnu polity set the style and tone for a number of political and institutional features of future steppe formations.

The Xianbei and later Hunnic states. The Xiongnu were succeeded by a series of polities, composed mainly of their former Xianbei subjects (probably largely Proto-Mongolic in speech) or mixed Xianbei-Xiongnu peoples in Mongolia and in the northern Chinese borderlands. The title *Qaghan* ("Emperor") is first noted among Xianbei tribes in the 3rd century. Subsequently, it became the standard imperial title in the steppe world.

The Tuoba Northern Wei/Tabghach. The Northern Wei-Tuoba/Tabghach state (386-534, split into Eastern Wei, 534-550 and Western Wei, 535-556, and their short-lived successors) of probable Xianbei origin, controlled northern China and periodically asserted its power in the steppes.

The Kushan Empire. The tribes that had earlier been pushed westward destroying Graeco-Bactria, replaced it with the Kushan Empire (ca. 1st century BCE/1st century CE-ca. 270s CE), which fell to the Sâsânid Empire of Iran (ca. 226-651). The Kushans created a syncretistic culture, drawing on traditions from Graeco-Bactria, India and the Iranian world. Buddhism made some headway there and the Kushan state became the source for Buddhist proselytizing, via the oasis city-states of Xinjiang/Eastern Turkestan, as far as China.

The Huns of Europe. Peoples set in motion by the Xiongnu collapse and bearing the name "Hun" appeared on the borders of Iran and then the Volga River by 350. A generation later they crossed the Volga, destroyed the Goths and periodically raided the Eastern Roman Empire ultimately creating the "empire" of Attila (d. 453).

The Oghuric peoples. Shortly after Attila's death, Oghuric-Turkic-speaking peoples, fleeing turmoil in the eastern steppes related to the activities of the Rouran/Asian Avars, crossed the Volga and made contact with Constantinople ca. 463.

Readings

T.J. Barfield, *The Perilous Frontier*, 85-129

D. Christian, *A History of Russia, Central Asia and Mongolia*, 209-243

R.N. Frye, *The Heritage of Central Asia*, 131-166

P.B. Golden, *Central Asia in World History*, 35-44

D. Sinor (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Early Inner Asia*, 118-205

Recommended:

P.B. Golden, *An Introduction to the History of the Turkic Peoples*, 69-104

H.R. Roemer (ed.), *History of the Turkic Peoples in the Pre-Islamic Period*, 52-101.

Questions

1. Discuss the origins and organization of the Xiongnu polity. Was the Xiongnu realm a state or an "imperial confederation"?
2. Discuss the rise of the Northern Wei/Tuoba-Tabghach state, its polyglot, multi-ethnic population and political organization.
3. Discuss Barfield's notion of dual administration. Why is this associated with the "Manchurian" peoples?
4. Discuss the Kushan empire, its political and cultural significance across Eurasia.
5. Discuss the formation of Attila's "empire" and its impact on Europe.

PART III – EARLY POSTCLASSICAL PERIOD : PRE-ISLAMIC

Türk Empires

Introduction

Rouran/Asian Avar Empire. The Rouran/Asian Avar Qaghanate (4th century-552) arose in Mongolia and gradually brought most of the neighboring eastern Eurasian nomadic peoples under its control. Avar and "Hunnic" nomads leaving the conflicts in the east came to what had been the Kushan realm centered in Afghanistan in the latter half of the 4th century.

Hephthalites. Here, they came under the leadership of the Hephthalites, who continued many Kushan traditions (including use of the Bactrian language written in Greek script). The Tiele union (from the eastern tribes of which the Uyghurs derived) frequently rebelled against the Rouran/Avars.

Türks. The ancestors of the Türks, according to traditions recorded in the Chinese sources, were Rouran vassals, serving them as ironsmiths. Taking advantage of the rivalries of the fading dynasties in Mongolia and northern China, the Türks, led by the Ashina clan, overthrew the Rouran in 552 and rapidly expanded, creating an empire from the Manchurian and northern Chinese borderlands to the Ukrainian steppes. They pursued elements of the westward-fleeing Rouran/Avars and crushed the Hephthalite state as they advanced to the Black Sea steppes. The people that now called itself Avar (probably a mix of Inner Asian Avars and other peoples that joined them as they moved westward), in the late 560s, took refuge in Pannonia (Hungary) where they formed a state that frequently troubled Byzantium. Türk relations with Byzantium were established (568) directed against their common foes: the Sāsānid Empire and the Avars. The western Türks played an important role, as allies of Byzantium, in the latter's defeat of the Sāsānid Empire in 628.

Political ideology of the Türk Qaghanate. The Türk Empire soon divided into two spheres, eastern and western, with the eastern Qaghan nominally superior to the western Yabghu Qaghan. As with other Eurasian nomadic states, the right to rule, which was viewed as the collective possession of the royal clan, was frequently disputed, within and between the eastern and western Ashina.

Turkish Civilization. in Mongolia and adjoining lands. The Türk Qaghanate was a major actor in and facilitator of the commerce of the Silk Road. The Türks developed a unique writing system (the runiform alphabet) and fashioned from earlier steppe polities (Xiongnu, Rouran) a ruling hierarchy and political ideology of a heavenly mandated ruler and a paradigm of political organization for future Turkic states. Although some Türk rulers showed an interest in Buddhism, they remained followers of the *Tengri* (supreme celestial

deity) cult and practitioners of shamanism. Occasional plans for building cities put forward by some Qaghans in the east met strong resistance. Power, it was argued, derived from their mobility, an advantage that cities would limit. The Ötüken highlands and the region around the Orkhon River were the sacred core lands of the state. The western Türks made use of already existing cities (e.g. Suyâb) as "capitals," but they, like the eastern Türks, remained overwhelmingly nomadic.

Decline. A revived China under the Sui (581-618) and the Tang (618-907) was able to exploit Türk internal struggles, to destroy the eastern Qaghanate in 630 and subjugate the Western Qaghanate by 659. The eastern Türks revived their state (682-742/3), but were forced to engage in endless punitive expeditions against recalcitrant subject peoples. Additionally, beset by ongoing internecine strife, the eastern Qaghanate succumbed to a coalition of subject tribal confederations (Uyghur, Basmil and Qarluq). As with the fall of the Xiongnu, the eastern Türk collapse touched off a series of migrations of Turkic peoples westward.

The On Oq. The western Türks, also known as On Oq, revived by the late 7th century, came under eastern Türk control, but were themselves caught up in internal conflicts. By 766, they had been supplanted by the Qarluqs, who had migrated westward to the central zone of Central Asia (c. 745), fleeing the Uyghurs, now the dominant power

Readings

T.J. Barfield, *The Perilous Frontier*, 120-150

D. Christian, *A History of Russia, Central Asia and Mongolia*, 247-264, 277-303

Frye, *The Heritage of Central Asia*, 167-182

D. Sinor (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Early Inner Asia*, 206-228, 285-316

Recommended:

S.G. Klyashtorny, "The Royal Clan of the Turks and the Problem of Early Turkic-Iranian Contacts" *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* XLVII/3 (1994), 445-448.

P.B. Golden, "Ethnogenesis in the Tribal Zone: The Emergence of the Türks" *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 16 (2008/2009), pp.73-112.

The Orkhon inscriptions- see English translation in T. Tekin, *A Grammar of Orkhon Turkic*, 259-295

Questions

1. Discuss the formation of the Rouran/Asian Avar Empire and Rouran-Northern Wei relations
2. Who were the Hephthalites and what were their relations with Iran?
3. Discuss the question of Türk origins and the creation of the Türk Qaghanate.
4. Discuss Sino-Türk relations. What were the factors leading to the fall of the first and second Türk Qaghanates
5. In what ways were the Xiongnu and Türk Empires similar? In what ways did they differ?
6. What were the problems of succession and governance in the Türk Qaghanate?
7. What was the message of the Türk Orkhon inscriptions of Tonyuquq, Kül Tegin, and Bilge Qaghan?
8. Discuss the *Tengri* cult and Türk religion

The Uyghur Empire

Introduction

The Uyghur Empire. The Uyghurs (744-840) were a successor state of the Türks in the east (Mongolia). Taking advantage of the An Lushan rebellion (755) in China, the Uyghurs, at the request of the Tang, invaded and helped to defeat the rebels. Thereafter, the Uyghurs both supported and exploited the Tang, extorting large quantities of silk, in particular.

The Soghdians in the Türk and Uyghur states. In this enterprise, the Uyghurs closely collaborated with the Soghdian merchant colonies in Central Asia and China. Soghdia never formed a coherent political unity. It consisted of separate city-states, led by quasi-royal houses (e.g. the Jamûg in Bukhara and Samarqand), but often forced to share power with nobles and wealthy merchants who resided in palatial, fortified homes. The rulers, nobles and well-to-do merchants had their own trained military forces, the *châkars*.

Uyghur Civilization. The Uyghurs adopted a form of the Soghdian (Aramaic-based) alphabet, which eventually supplanted the runiform script and continued in use among Turkic peoples until Islamization. Mongols and Manchus, in turn, subsequently adopted this alphabet as well. The Uyghurs were also interested in various religions that the Soghdians brought into their midst: Manichaeism, Nestorian Christianity and Buddhism. In 762, the Uyghur Qaghan, Bögü, converted to Manichaeism, which, after some resistance, became closely associated with the Uyghur state or at least its ruling elite. The Uyghurs built cities, including Ordu Balıq, their capital on the Orkhon River.

Qırghız conquest. The Qırghız tribes in the Yenisei region, long resentful of Uyghur domination, exploiting Uyghur throne struggles, invaded, overran the Uyghur capital and destroyed their empire. The Uyghurs dispersed, eventually forming smaller states in Xinjiang/Eastern Turkestan and Gansu. The Qırghız, whom even the Türks had recognized as being ruled by a Qaghan, unlike their predecessors, did not long remain in the Orkhon and Selenge River regions the core territory of earlier nomadic states in Mongolia, but returned to their Yenisei homelands from which they conducted commercial relations with China and the Islamic world.

The Liao Empire and the movement of Mongols into Mongolia. In the early 10th century, the Mongolic or Para-Mongolic-speaking Qitan, formerly Türk vassals, created a powerful empire in Manchuria and northern China. Known as the Liao Dynasty (916-1125) in China, they extended their authority to Mongolia. Harsh Liao rule contributed to the ongoing westward movement of Turkic tribes. Mongolic peoples of the Siberian and Manchuro-Mongolian borderlands moved into Mongolia.

Readings

T.J. Barfield, *The Perilous Frontier*, 150-177

D. Christian, *A History of Russia, Central Asia and Mongolia*, 264-276

Frye, *The Heritage of Central Asia*, 167-198

P.B. Golden, *Central Asia in World History*, 44-49

D. Sinor (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Early Inner Asia*, 317-342, 400-423.

Recommended:

H.R. Roemer, *History of the Turkic Peoples in the Pre-Islamic Period*, 187-204.

M.R. Drompp, "Breaking the Orkhon Tradition: Kirghiz Adherence to the Yenisei Region After A.D. 840" *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 119/3 (1999), 390-403.

Questions

1. How did the Uyghurs come to power?
2. Were the Uyghurs merely a successor state of the Türks or did they represent something different?
3. What was the role of the Soghdians in the Türk and Uyghur Empires"?
4. Discuss Soghdian culture
5. Discuss the Manichaeism religion. Why did the Uyghurs convert to Manichaeism?
5. Discuss the rise of the Liao state and its consequences.

The Turkic Peoples of the Western steppes

Introduction

Khazars. The internecine strife of the western Türks in the first half of the 8th century allowed for the breakaway of the more western elements ca. 630-650. This led to the rise of the Khazar Qaghanate, a successor state of the western Türks, ruled, apparently, by a branch of the Türk royal house, the Ashina. The Khazar Empire included Turkic, Iranian, Slavic, Finno-Ugric and North Caucasian peoples, extending from the steppes east of the Volga (their capital city, Atıl/Ätil, was located in the lower Volga region) to the Ukrainian steppes and the Crimea and northward to the middle Volga lands of the Volga Bulgars, a subject state. Khazaria, after prolonged warfare with the Arabs for control of the Caucasus (ending after 737), became a major player in north-south and east-west trade, and enjoyed extensive commercial relations with the Arabian Caliphate and Byzantium. In the late 8th-early 9th century, the Khazar ruling elite largely converted to Judaism, followed by some of their core tribes. The Khazars weakened in the 10th century, perhaps as more trade shifted to Volga Bulgaria. The Rus' in alliance with the Oghuz overran their capital in 965, 967-9 and the Khazars faded as a power thereafter.

Volga Bulgars. The Volga Bulgars derived from Oghuro-Bulgar tribes that had been subjugated by the Khazars in the latter part of the 7th century. In the course of the 8th to early 10th century, Bulgar tribes made their way to the Middle Volga region where they established a powerful trading empire with the northern peoples. They converted to Islam in the early 10th century, which undoubtedly helped to strengthen their ties with Muslim Central Asia, their major trading partners.

Hungarians. The ancestors of the Hungarians (the Magyar tribal union) came out of the Finno-Ugric forest steppe periphery, were drawn further into the steppe and closely interacted with Turkic peoples. They became part of the Khazar Qaghanate and in the course of the ninth century following two attacks from the Pechenegs (who had been driven into the Pontic steppes by the Oghuz), expelled the Hungarians who then settled in Pannonia (Hungary) in 895.

Readings

D. Sinor (ed,), *The Cambridge History of Early Inner Asia*, 229-284

Recommended:

D.M. Dunlop, *The History of the Jewish Khazars*.

P.B. Golden, *An Introduction to the History of the Turkic Peoples*, 189-232.

Questions

1. Discuss the origins of the Khazar Qaghanate
2. Discuss the origins of the Volga Bulghar state
3. What were the roles of the Khazars and Volga Bulgars in international trade?
4. Why did the Khazars convert to Judaism and the Volga Bulgars to Islam?
5. Trace the origins and migrations of the Hungarians.

The Turkic Peoples of Central Asia

Introduction

The Islamic conquest of Transoxiana (the lands beyond the Oxus/ Amu Darya River) Arab raids into Transoxiana (the lands beyond the Amu Darya River) followed after their conquest of Iran in 651. These raids became more purposeful in the late 7th century and eventually led to conquest in the early decades of the 8th century. Although Arab rule in Bukhara, Samarqand and elsewhere in Soghdia, established only a few years earlier, was shaken in 715, by the 740s Arabo-Muslim control of the major Soghdian cities was again secure. Islam was initially largely limited to the cities, but in time (several centuries) spread to the Iranian-speaking (Soghdian and Khwarazmian) rural regions.

The Turkic Peoples of the Central Asia. The large-scale movement of Turkic peoples into the region complicated the interplay of Iranian and Arab elements. Turkic peoples were long present in the area, predating the Türk conquest of the region and intensifying in the latter half of the 6th century (the Soghdians cooperated with them). The destruction of the Türk and Uyghur empires brought additional Turkic peoples westward. Arabs, western Türks, Türgesh, Tibetans and Chinese fought for control of Transoxiana and adjoining areas.

Qarluqs. The Qarluqs appeared ca. 745, following their defeat at the hands of the Uyghurs, establishing their new home in Semirechie. Their defection to the Arabo-Muslim forces at the Battle of the Talas in 751 secured the Arab victory and by 766 the Qarluqs were masters of the Western Türk lands.

Oghuz. In the 770s, the Oghuz also entered the region from the east, settling to the west of the Qarluqs near the Syr Darya and bordering on the Khazar Qaghanate in the Volga zone. Both the Qarluqs and Oghuz were led by rulers bearing the old Central Asian title *Yabghu*, although there are some indications in Muslim sources that the Qarluqs, perhaps after 840, also claimed the title of Qaghan. The Turks, both old and new arrivals, came into contact with the Irano-Muslim population of Transoxiana. There was frequent warfare. Those Qarluqs and Oghuz who became Muslims were termed *Türkmen*.

Kimeks. The Kimeks, in whose tribal union the Qıpchaqs formed a more westerly element enjoying some degree of autonomy, controlled large swaths of Western Siberia and were a source of continual pressure on the Qarluqs and Oghuz. Unnoted in earlier sources, the Kimeks were a powerful union whose ruler claimed Qaghanal status. The Kimeks, who are credited with possessing one town, were an important link with the northern forest peoples and the fur trade.

Readings

W. Barthold, *Turkestan Down to the Mongol Invasion*, 1-37, 64-198
D. Christian, *A History of Russia, Central Asia and Mongolia*, 277-326, 353-382
P.B. Golden, *Central Asia in World History*, 50-75

Recommended

P.B. Golden, *An Introduction to the History of the Turkic Peoples*, 189-211
S.G. Klyashtorny, "The Polovcian Problem (II): Qipčaq, Cumans and Polovciansm" *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 58/3 (2005), 243-248

Questions

1. The social structure of Pre-Islamic Soghdia
2. Discuss the migrations of the Turkic peoples to Transoxiana
2. Discuss the Muslim conquest of Transoxiana
3. Was the battle of the Talas (751) truly significant?
4. Did the Turkic peoples form states in the Transoxanian steppes?
5. Who were the Turkic peoples on the borders of Islamic Central Asia and how were they organized?

PART II – LATE POSTCLASSICAL PERIOD : TURKO-ISLAMIC STATES

Early Turko-Muslim States

Introduction

Samanids. The Sāmānids (819-1005) were a Persian-speaking dynasty descended from Zoroastrian landed aristocracy of the Balkh region in Afghanistan that claimed (a probably spurious) tie to the Sāsānid house. After the conversion to Islam (720s or 730s) of the family's progenitor, Sāmān Khudā, they took service with the 'Abbāsīd Caliphate (750-1258) and by the early 9th century had become the representatives of 'Abbāsīd authority and Sunnī Islam in Transoxiana and adjoining steppe regions as well as Khurāsān. Their principal centers were Bukhara and Samarqand. They supplied numerous Turks taken in these campaigns to the 'Abbāsīd caliphs, whom the Turkic captives served as "military slaves" (ghulāms).

Neo-Persian Culture. The Sāmānids were patrons of Neo-Persian culture (Persian written in Arabic script) that fused Islamic and Old Iranian values and traditions. Bukhara became a major Neo-Persian cultural center. Sāmānid military conquests expanded the Islamized zone of Central Asia.

Turkic Islamization. The Muslim mystic orders, the Ṣūfīs, increasing numbers of whom came from Turkic society (e.g. Aḥmad Yasawī, d. ca. 1166) came to play a role in Islamization, especially in the era following the Mongol invasion. Muslims found a Turkic population that already had considerable exposure to the Abrahamic and other religious traditions. Some of the key Turkic words for religious concepts (*uchmaq* "heaven," *tamu[q]* "hell") were old borrowings from Soghdian. The conversions of rulers played an important role.

Ghaznavids. As the Sāmānids weakened in the course of the 10th century, one of their slave generals, Alp Tegin, broke away, establishing himself in Ghazna. Under Sebük Tegin, they formed the Ghaznavid state (977-1186) centered in Afghanistan-northwestern India with control extending to Khurāsān. They acquired great wealth through raids into Hindu India under Maḥmūd (998-1030), the greatest figure of the dynasty.

Qarakhanids. Qarakhanid origins, in contrast, remain more complex and the subject of debate. Satuq Bughra Khan (d. 955), the semi-legendary founder of the Qarakhanid state converted to Islam, according to traditions recorded later, under the influence of a merchant. By 960, there are reports of mass conversions of Turks. This seems to be the prelude to the founding of the Qarakhanid state (992-1212), in western and eastern Turkestan, deriving from Qarluq and other tribes. The name "Qarakhanid" is one "invented" by scholars. In Muslim sources, they were called and apparently used these terms themselves, the "Qaghanal Dynasty," hinting perhaps at Ashina connections, and the "House of Afrāsiyāb," the latter the leader of Turan, which, according to Iranian tradition, represented the age-old nomadic nemesis of Iran. In the course of the 990s, the Qarakhanids gained control of much of Sāmānid Central Asia, taking Bukhara in 999. In the first half of the 11th century (ca. 1020- 1040), they split into eastern and western Qaghanates.

Eleventh Century. The Ghaznavids and Qarakhanids contested control of key regions of Central Asia. In 1017, Maḥmūd of Ghazna appointed Altuntash, one of his commanders, as the ruler of Khwārazm, an important trading emporium in today's western Uzbekistan.

Khwârazm had been a significant regional power since antiquity. By 1005, the fading Sâmânids had ceased to be a factor. New forces were coming to the fore.

Readings

W. Barthold, *Turkestan Down to the Mongol Invasion*, 198-380
D. Sinor (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Early Inner Asia*, 343-361

Recommended:

B.D. Kochnev, "The Origins of the Karakhanids: A Reconsideration" *Der Islam*, 73 (1996), 352-357

Questions

- 1 What role did the Sâmânid state play in the development of Neo-Persian Culture?
- 2 What were the relations of the Sâmânids with the Turkic world?
3. Discuss the origins and expansion of the Ghaznavids
- 4 From which groups did the Qarakhanids emerge? What was the role of Islam in defining the Qarakhanid state?

Seljuks

Introduction

Rise of the Seljuks. By the 11th century, the Oghuz, divided into 22 or 24 subgroupings, were already noted by the lexicographer, Maḥmûd al-Kâshgharî as having extensive cultural as well as economic and political contacts with the Iranian (predominantly Persian-speaking) cities. They were surrounded by powerful and occasionally hostile neighbors. According to (occasionally contradictory) traditions, the Seljuks descended from Selchûk, a *sûbashi* (military commander) from the Qınıq tribe, who had broken with his immediate overlords (either the Khazar Qaghan or the Oghuz Yabghu), settled in Jand on the Syr Darya, ca. 985 (or earlier) and converted to Islam. His sons found themselves caught up in the Ghaznavid-Qarakhanid rivalry. Their early history and movements remain obscure. By the mid-1030s as conditions became more difficult for them in Central Asia, they were in Khurâsân where their depredations forced the Ghaznavid ruler Mas'ûd (1030-1040) to take action against them. The Ghaznavids were utterly routed by the Seljuks at Dandânqân in 1040. The Ghaznavid state went into a steep decline, becoming limited to eastern Afghanistan and its northern Indian holdings. The Seljuks, now led by Toghrul Beg and Chaghri Beg, grandsons of the dynasty's founder, quickly gained control of Iran.

Seljuk relations with the Caliphate. In 1055, now in Baghdad, Toghrul's title of Sultan (which he had claimed years earlier) was recognized by the 'Abbâsid Caliph, whose military arm the Seljuks now became.

The Great Seljuk Empire. As with other Turkic states, a kind of dual kingship briefly developed: Toghrul ruling in the west and his brother Chaghri in the east (Khurâsân). Now, centered in the Middle East, Seljukid rulers began to follow traditional patterns of monarchic governance more attuned to older Iranian practices that were in contrast to Oghuz notions of the ruler. Dramatic clashes with the Oghuz tribes would result. In 1063, Chaghri's son, Alp Arslan (1063-1072) became the sole source of political authority, aided by the famous Persian statesman, Niẓâm al-Mulk (d. 1092). Alp Arslan sought to extend his authority to lands controlled by the rival Shi'ite Fâtîmids in the eastern Mediterranean littoral and Egypt.

Faced with a potential threat from Byzantium (in decline militarily since the death of Basil II in 1025), which was responding to Oghuz raiding in Anatolia, Alp Arslan defeated the Byzantines at Malazgirt/Manzikert in 1071. This fully opened the path to Oghuz migration to Anatolia, substantial portions of which came under Turkish control. The Seljuk conquests also played a role in causing the Crusades. Seljuk expansion back to Central Asia took place under Alp Arslan's son, Malikshâh (1072-1092), who defeated the Oghuz Yabghu and extended Seljuk authority to the Qarakhanids. After Malikshâh's death, the "Great Seljuk" empire, as historians term it, beset by throne struggles within the Seljuk house, declined. The last effective ruler was Sanjar (d. 1157).

The Qara Khitay. The Qara Khitay, the Qitan/Liao driven out of northern China in 1125 by the Jurchens, had established a powerful state in Central Asia. They consolidated their position by defeating Sanjar in 1141. The latter's harsh rule then ignited a revolt of his own Oghuz tribesmen that, along with a corps of slave-soldiers (ghulâms) had constituted the base of Seljuk military might. Sanjar, held in captivity by the rebellious tribesmen (escaping in 1155), was a broken figure.

Khwârazmshâhs. The Great Seljuks further fragmented, thus opening the way to the Khwârazmshâhs (1077-1231), Seljuk servitors who had long chafed under Seljuk rule, to become a power in Central Asia. The Khwârazmshâhs contested control over parts of Iran and sought to extend their authority to Iraq. The head of the last "Great Seljuk" ruler, Toghrul III (1176-1194) was sent to the Khwârazmshâh Tekish (1172-1200). The latter's son and heir, Muḥammad (1200-1220), was – in theory – the most powerful force in western Central Asia.

Readings

A.C.S. Peacock, *Early Seljūq History*.

D. Sinor (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Early Inner Asia*, 361-370

Recommended:

G. Leiser, *A History of the Seljuks. İbrahim Kafesoğlu's Interpretation and the Resulting Controversy*.

Questions

1. Discuss the different narratives of Seljuk origins.
2. Discuss the causes for the rise and fall of the Great Seljuks.
3. Discuss the rise of the Khwârazmshâhs.

The Seljuks of Rum

Introduction

The Turkish conquest of Anatolia. The conquest of Anatolia had not been an “official” policy of the Seljuk government. Byzantine ineptitude and divisions greatly aided the incoming Oghuz tribesmen and their land-hungry chiefs.

The Seljuk struggle for power. A Seljukid, Süleyman, son of Qutlumush (a grandson of Selchük) who had led a branch of the Seljukids that were rivals of Alp Arslan and Malikshâh, sought to carve out a territory for himself here. Having been held in captivity by his Seljukid cousins, he appears to have escaped after 1072, appeared in Anatolia and established his center at Ikonion/Konya. He garnered some support from the Byzantines, who sought a counterforce to the “Great Seljuks,” but faced ongoing hostility from the latter. Tutush, Malikshâh’s brother, killed Süleyman when he attempted to extend his authority to Syria. Again in captivity, Süleyman’s line, represented by his son, Qılıç Arslan I (1092-1107), returned to Anatolia in 1092. He was not the only power-seeker in Turkish Anatolia. The Dânishmand house, which comes into view at this time, in particular, were rivals.

Rûm Seljukid state. Qılıç Arslan II (1156-1192), having subjugated the Dânishmands in 1174 and ending Byzantine hopes of regaining Anatolia with his victory at the Battle of Myriokephalon in 1176, seemed to have secured political preeminence for his Seljukid line in Anatolia. His division of his territories among his sons undid much of his work of unification. A restoration of central authority was evident in the latter part of the 12th century and early 13th century under Süleyman II (1197-1204), Kay Khusraw I (1192-1197, 1205-1211) and Kay Kâvûs I (1211-1220). The zenith of Rûm Seljukid power was attained by ‘Alâ’ üd-Dîn Kay Qubâd I (1220-1237). By that time, however, the Mongols were already a presence in Central Asia and advancing in the Middle East.

Baba Ishaq Revolt. The Seljukid realm was rocked in 1240 by the revolt of a dervish leader Baba Işhâq, from the east who found followers among heterodox Türkmen tribesmen. Little is known about his actual doctrines, but he had been inciting trouble since 1233. The revolt was suppressed but it left the Seljukids of Rûm weakened just as the Mongols appeared.

Readings (Recommended)

C. Cahen, *The Formation of Turkey*, 7-169

Questions

1. Was the Turkish conquest of Anatolia/Rûm state-directed?
2. How did the Seljuks form a state Anatolia/Rûm? Who were their competitors?
3. What was the cause of Rûm Seljukid internal strife?

The Turkic World during the Mongol Empire

Introduction

The Tribes/Peoples of Mongolia. Under pressure from the Jurchen-derived Jin dynasty (1125-1234) and the Tatars who often served as their proxies, controlling the tribal confederations of Mongolia, the Mongol people, one of several tribal unions in Mongolia, were pushed to statehood under the dynamic leadership of Chinggis Khan (d. 1227).

Chinggis Khan. This first involved the conquest of his neighbors, including the Tatars, Kereyid, Naiman and others and their unification into a union of obedient subjects and then expansion outward into East and Central Asia. By 1218, Chinggis had overrun the Qara Qitay and in 1220 took Transoxiana, crushing the Khwârazmshâh Muḥammad. The Mongols pursued his son, the militarily brilliant but politically inept Jalâl al-Dîn Mengüberti (d. 1231), who was killed by Kurds while in flight in the Middle East. The hunt for Jalâl al-Dîn brought the Mongols to the Middle East; they raided Iraq and Transcaucasia and then conducted a reconnaissance in depth that took Mongol forces to Eastern Europe. They defeated the Qipchaqs and Rus' in 1223, but were less successful against the Volga Bulgars. Chinggis died on campaign against the Tanguts.

The Chinggisid conquests. His sons, after selecting his third son, Ögödei (d. 1241), as their supreme Qaghan in 1229 (in reality each of his four sons (from his wife Börte) or their heirs (the eldest son, Jochi, had predeceased his father by some months) enjoyed full sovereignty in their realms [*uluses*]), the Chinggisids planned their next campaigns. At a *quriltai* ("princely assembly") held in 1235, the plans for the conquest of Song China, the Qipchaqs, Rus' and the Middle East were set out. Mongol conquests were delayed by problems of succession. The death of Ögödei in 1241, for example, halted the advance into East-Central Europe. Waves of Central Asian refugees (including Persian-speaking men of letters and officials), Turkic tribesmen in Khwârazmian service and eastern Oghuz, fled to Iran and Asia Minor, producing dislocations and turmoil.

Ilkhanids. The Mongols were soon in the Middle East again and defeated the Seljukids of Rûm at Köse Dagh in 1243. The Seljukids became a tribute-paying vassal state, one troubled by weak governance and increasing domestic disorder. The "Türkmen" tribes were a particular source of disruption, while local *amîrs* made their own accommodations with the Mongols. The latter exploited and exacerbated these problems and then sent forces to establish order. Meanwhile, Möngke (1251-1259), son of Tolui, Chinggis's youngest son, became Great Qaghan and resumed a vigorous program of conquest. His brother, Hülegü, led the expedition to the Middle East. He sacked Baghdad in 1258, bringing the 'Abbâsîd Caliphate to an end. Mongol rule in Anatolia became a kind of "protectorate" demanding considerable tribute and intervening in local affairs when it served their interests. After 1243, the *Pervâne* (lit. "moth, butterfly," the official who brought the sultan's messages) Mu'în ad-Dîn Süleyman (d. 1277) increasingly assumed control of the affairs of state. An inveterate intriguer, his diplomatic dalliances with the Mamlûk sultan Baybars, led to an expedition by the latter to Anatolia in which he defeated Mongol forces (1276-77), took the Seljuk center at Kayseri and hoped to take full control. Baybars's expectations of Anatolian Turkish Muslim support, however, were never realized and he withdrew. Mongol rule had only been slightly shaken. The Ilkhan Abagha (1265-82) reasserted Mongol control and executed the *Pervâne*.

The late Seljuks. The Seljukids of Rûm were the ultimate losers, becoming little more than puppets of Mongol and local forces. They were brought under more direct Ilkhanid control, which feared further Mamlûk interventions. Local powers based on Türkmen

chieftains, such as the Qaramanids, who had asserted themselves during the crisis of 1276-77, the Germiyan and others were also a concern.

Turkic World. The Mongol conquests reconfigured elements of the Turkic world. The earlier tribal unions were broken up as all loyalty was to be directed to the Chinggisid house. Fragments of tribes were scattered eventually reforming in new groups sometimes bearing new names deriving from the names of leading Chinggisids, or others. This was different than earlier Central Asian Turkic tradition. The new units, retribalized in time, but were now a mix of different clans representing onetime larger units brought under the leadership of a charismatic chieftain.

Pre-Ottomans. As Ilkhanid rule slackened in the late 13th-early 14th century, small Turkish polities had begun to form on the frontiers of their empire. Among them, on the western frontier, strategically located on the main route to Constantinople, was the *beylik* ("principality") of Osman, the founder of the Ottoman state. The name *Osmanlı* ("Ottoman, a follower of Osman) is typical of these new "tribal" names. The early pages of Ottoman history have to be viewed in this larger context: a fading Ilkhanid state, the end of the Seljukids of Rûm (the last of whom died in 1307/1308) and an ever-shrinking Byzantine state.

Readings

T.J. Barfield, *The Perilous Frontier*, 177-228

W. Barthold, *Turkestan Down to the Mongol Invasion*, 381-394

D. Christian, *A History of Russia, Central Asia and Mongolia*, 383-429

P.B. Golden, *Central Asia in World History*, 76-90

Recommended:

C. Cahen, *The Formation of Turkey*, 173-270

Questions

1. What were the polities of Central Asia ca. 1200.
2. Discuss the rise of Chinggis Khan and the Mongol Empire
3. Discuss the Chinggisid conquests in the Middle East and the rise of the Ilkhanid state
4. Discuss the Seljuks of Rûm under Mongol rule