

TURKIC INNOVATION

Overview In comparison to other world empires and states the First and Second Gök Türk Empires, the Uighur Empire and the Uighur Kingdom of Qocho were all relatively short-lived. Despite this, each of these states had an influence on world history and culture that far exceeded their short existence.

Gök Türks The First Gök Türk Empire played a major role in the history of Eurasia due to the territorial extent of their state. By expanding westward beyond the bounds of the earlier Hsiung-nu Empire, the predominantly nomadic Gök Türk became the link between the settled states of the Byzantine Empire and Sasanian Iran in the west, and China to the east. Once linked through the Gök Türk state, long distance overland trade between China and the west revived, and where trade goes ideas, religions, and information generally follow.

It can be argued that the greatest historical contribution of Second Gök Türk Empire was leaving a written record of their leaders and the events of their time. The Old Turkic inscriptions from the Second Gök Türk Empire are the oldest evidence of the Turkic languages and are the only written records from any nomadic people in Inner Asia in the early medieval period. With these inscriptions historians who research Inner Asia are able to understand events from the perspective of a steppe people, rather than having to rely solely on the accounts of their often hostile neighbors.

Readings

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Discussion Questions

1. Why are the Old Turkic inscriptions from the Second Gök Türk Empire historically significant?