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**STATE FORMATION AND THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF THE TÜRK  
QAGANATE  
Ph.D. THESIS  
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## PREFACE

Although there are many works written about the political history of Türk Qaganate, no exhaustive study has been done on state formation. When I started my doctorate education in the Department of Medieval Studies of Szeged University, my supervisor Prof. Dr. István Zimonyi encouraged me to work in this field. During my research some works of authorities such as those of Drompp, Kradin, Skaff, Di Cosmo, Stark guided me in studying the political and cultural structures of the Türk Qaganate and the Eurasian nomads.

The study starts with an overview of the main sources on the history of the Türk Qaganate and the secondary literature about our subject. Then the review of the political history of Türk Qaganate is described in the introduction. The thesis consists of 5 main chapters. The first chapter deals with the economic structure of the Türk Qaganate. I discuss the problem of the complexity of economic structure emphasizing that the Türks had an economic structure different from the one-sided nomad economy in this section. The second chapter is about the military organization and the warfare of the Türk Qaganate. The innovations of the Türks in the military field will also be taken into consideration. In Chapter 3 the titles of the state hierarchy among the nomads are studied. In Chapter 4, the social strata of the Türk state and then the general political characteristics of the Qaganate will be mentioned. In the last chapter, the foreign relations of the Türks and their relations with nomad clans will be discussed.

I would like to express my thanks to my family, friends, and all academics who have helped me throughout my work. I would like to thank the Ministry of National Education of the Republic of Turkey and Tempus Public Foundation of Hungary that supported my PhD education with a scholarship named Stipendium Hungaricum. I express my thanks to Prof. Sándor Papp, head of Historical Doctoral Scholl at University of Szeged giving me the opportunity to do my PhD here. Endless thanks to Dr. Balázs Danko who helped me with reading runic inscriptions of the Türks and Dr. Éva Kincses-Nagy who taught me Hungarian with a patient. Apart from that, I would like to thank all the academicians working in the Institute of History and the Department of Altaic Studies of the University of Szeged for teaching me. Last but not least, I offer my endless respect and gratitude to my supervisor Prof. István Zimonyi who gave me a new perspective on Türks and nomad history, guided me with a patient during my PhD thesis.

## INTRODUCTION

### 1. SOURCES

The Türk Qaganate is the first nomadic empire that is described by its own sources. Besides, as a great nomadic empire including the territory from Manchuria to the Crimea Greek, Syriac, Armenian, Chinese and Muslim sources mentioned it several times.

#### 1.1. Internal sources

The oldest known monument from the Türk Qaganate is the Bugut inscription discovered in 1956 in the Arkhangay province of Mongolia. It is bilingual, written in Sogdian and Brahmi Sanskrit.<sup>1</sup> It derives its name from the Bugut Mountain located in the Bayn Tsagaan Gol (The Sacred White Lake) region within the Arkhangay Aymag. Its location was discovered by a Mongolian scholar Dorjsüren in 1956. On the inscription in recent years, many scholars have published research papers, analyses, and reviews. These texts are basically on "the order of the Türk/Bilge Qagan Nivar to erect a monument on the death of Mahan Tegin", "the joint reign of Mahan Tegin and Mukan Qagan", "the ascend of Mahan Tegin to the throne", "the joint reign of Mahan Tegin and Taspar Qagan (Taspar Qagan)", and so on, what happened during the years 572-580 AD.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, according to a recent work of Vovin, the Brahmi inscription has been interpreted as Mongolic. It turned out that the language underlying the Brahmi inscription is Mongolic, quite closely related, although not quite identical to the Middle Mongolian of the thirteenth–fourteenth centuries.<sup>3</sup>

The Khüis Tolgoi Inscription must have been erected sometime between 604 and 620 AD.<sup>4</sup> The Brahmi text of the inscription has been deciphered as Mongolian from the period of the first Türk Qaganate. The Mongolic nature of the morphology lies beyond any reasonable doubt especially in the Khüis Tolgoi Inscription. Furthermore, Vovin suggests that it seems that the language can be identified with the Ruanruan language. They created a steppe Empire that before the Türk Qaganate.<sup>5</sup>

The Orkhon Inscriptions represent the first Turkic and basic internal sources of the second Türk Qaganate. First of all, the Swedish Strahlenberg brought news about these inscriptions, who had been detained in Siberia after the Battle of Poltava in 1713 and 1722. In

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<sup>1</sup> PRITSAK 1987: 754-755.

<sup>2</sup> KLYASHTORNY 1964; BAZIN 1994a, ROUX 1962; TEKİN 1968. According to Vovin, the Bugut Inscription is dated by 584 AD (most likely), but no later than 587 AD (VOVIN 2019: 163).

<sup>3</sup> VOVIN 2019: 162-197.

<sup>4</sup> VOVIN 2019: 163.

<sup>5</sup> VAISSIÈRE 2018: 153-157; VOVIN 2019: 163-164.



1889, Yadrintsev, a Siberian researcher, discovered three inscriptions in the then Outer Mongolia. One of them was the trilingual Karabalgasun, while the other two had two inscriptions in Khöshöö-Tsaidam, which later named as Orkhon Inscriptions. Radloff led an expedition to Siberia. In 1891 Yadrintsev discovered the Ongin, and Klementz discovered Tonyuquq Inscription near Tola River in 1897. The inscriptions were examined by British Campbell in 1909. French Lacoste (1909), and Polish Kotwicz (1912) also visited them. On 15<sup>th</sup> of December 1893, V. Thomsen announced that he solved the writing system of the inscriptions. Russian scholar Radloff announced the first release and translation of Kül Tegin's inscription on January 19, 1894. In 1856 Thomsen published his translation in Helsinki. Thomsen ended his research in 1925 and summarized the findings he had discovered.

In the first 50 years of research, runiform inscriptions were edited by Thomsen, Radloff, Malov, Ramstedt, and others. Orkun 1936-41 is a collected reedition of all this material. A great many short runiform inscriptions were then discovered or rediscovered, edited, or reedited in the Soviet Union, mostly by Vasilyev, Kyzlasov, Klyashtorny, and Kormušin. Lists of runiform inscriptions can be found in Vasilyev 1976/78 and Sertkaya 1984.<sup>6</sup> In 1968 Talat Tekin signed for very important work, working on the grammar of the Old Turkic and translating the inscriptions.<sup>7</sup> Árpád Berta's work is one of the most important recent works on the inscriptions.<sup>8</sup>

The Choir inscription was located at Eastern Gobi, South of the Sansar-Ula Mountain, and 15 km far away from the Choir railway station. The tomb was found by Jamtsarano Tseeveen and Sendsüren before 1928. Orkun, Bold, and Sertkaya did some publications on the inscription respectively.<sup>9</sup> The main inscription is basically 4 lines on the statue. The inscription is dated back to the first ruling years of Elterish (Ilteriš) Qagan. According to Klyashtorny's opinion, the inscription could be made between 688 and 691, after the Türks had left the southern part of Gobi and recaptured the Ötüken in 687.

The Küli Čor (Čor), (Ikhe Khushotu) Inscription was found in Mongolia, 200 km Southwest of Ulaanbaatar in Ikhe Khushotu region by Kotwicz in 1912. The text was first reported by him with Samovsky.<sup>10</sup> Then Malov and Tekin and others also studied the text.<sup>11</sup> The inscription is dated to II. Türk Qaganate times (720-725).

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<sup>6</sup> ERDAL 2004.

<sup>7</sup> TEKİN 1968.

<sup>8</sup> BERTA 2004.

<sup>9</sup> ORKUN 1938; BOLD 1990; SERTKAYA 1996.

<sup>10</sup> KOTWICZ-SAMOJLOVIČ 1926.

<sup>11</sup> MALOV 1959: 25–30; TEKİN 1968: 257–258, 293–294; CLAUSON-TRYJARSKI 1972; BOLD 2000: 132–153; BERTA 2004: 1–24.

The Ashete inscription is one of the inscriptions belonging to the Second Türk Qaganate period as Ikhe Khushotu (Küli Čor), Ongin, and Orkhon Inscriptions, and it is dated to 724.<sup>12</sup> It is located approximately 53 km northeast of the Kosho-Tsaidam valley where the Orkhon Inscriptions are located. The river, which passes 2,5 km west of the inscription, is called Khöl Asgat. For this reason, the inscription is also known as the Khöl Asgat Inscription. Levin was the first Russian scholar to visit. Then Yadrintsev, Orkun (1938), Malov (1959), and many other scholars worked on the inscription. There are some recent works of scholars such as Dobrovits (2007) and Osawa (2010). This inscription consists of two stones, but the second stone in runic is almost unreadable today. It is a memorial stone inscription and the sarcophagus includes few lines about Altun Tamgan Tarqan.<sup>13</sup>

The Tonyuquq Inscription (726) is 60 km east of Ulanbatur on the upper Tola valley was founded in 1897. Rybatzky published it critically in 1997. It is the first lengthy text in runic Turkic.

The inscriptions of Kül Tegin and Bilge Qagan (732, 734/5) were erected as a part of the tomb complex for the rulers of the Türk Qaganate and they describe the history of the Türk Qaganate from the viewpoint of the qagan and his court. They were published several times.<sup>14</sup>

The Ongin inscription, which consists of 19 lines, and which is located near the Ongin River was found by Yadrintsev. This inscription was first published by Radloff.<sup>15</sup> Clauson made the most important contribution to the inscription in 1957.<sup>16</sup> An article about the inscription was first published in Turkey in 1936 by Orkun.<sup>17</sup> The text of the inscription can be found in Tekin's book called *Orhon Türkçesi Grameri* published in 2000.<sup>18</sup> The names of Kapgan and Elterish were mentioned in the inscription which makes it more important. The date of the inscription is debated, it might belong to the end of the II. Türk Qaganate, after 732.

## 1.2. Greek sources

The Eastern Roman sources provide information on the Early Türks. They can be roughly divided into two categories: secular and ecclesiastic works. The most frequently used sources are: The History of Menander the Guardsman, The History of Theophylakt Simocatta, Chronographia of Theophanes Confessor, Theophanes Byzantius' account. Byzantine sources for the history of the Türks mostly show events between 582 and 630. The basic work of the

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<sup>12</sup> RÓNA-TAS 1999: 81; According to Osawa the inscription is dated to 729 (OSAWA 2010: 73).

<sup>13</sup> DOBROVITS 2007: 147.

<sup>14</sup> MALOV 1959: TEKİN 1968; BERTA 2004.

<sup>15</sup> RADOFF 1895.

<sup>16</sup> CLAUSON 1957.

<sup>17</sup> ORKUN 1936.

<sup>18</sup> TEKİN 2000.

Byzantine sources on the Turkic speaking peoples is Byzantino-Turcica of Gyula Moravcsik. The Latin and Greek sources for the history of the Türks were collected and translated into Hungarian with historical comments on them by Csaba Farkas in his doctoral thesis which is, unfortunately not published. Thanks to the work of Pentti Aalto and Tuomo Pekkanen the Latin texts for the Türks were put together in their overview of the Latin sources on the history of Inner Asia.<sup>19</sup> The dictionary of Byzantium is another great work on the Byzantium done under the lead of Alexander P. Kazhdan. It contains more than 5,000 passages by a universal bunch of prominent historians.<sup>20</sup>

The Byzantine literature, which is important for us, begins with Agathias (536-582) next to Prokopios was the chronicler of Justinos (527-565). He finished his work in 559. By the Byzantine literature (the name Τουρκοι), Agathias is the first one to mention the events of the year 552. But from his source, we can't get a considerable data from the historical point of view.<sup>21</sup>

The next author is Theophanes Byzantius. He mentions the Türks in his work named "Historika (Ιστορικά)", summarizing the events between 565 and 582. One of the most important information given by this source is that, the emperor II. Justinos sent Zemarchus to the Türks to make a contact in 569. The Türk origin of Kermichiones is verified by the fact that Byzantius mentions that the particular tribe sent gifts to emperor Justinos so that the latter refuse to accept the fleeing Avars.<sup>22</sup>

The first source dealing with the Türks in detail is the work of Menander Protector. Menander's work is called History. He was a soldier with high-rank, after finishing his service, he started writing his book under Emperor Mauricius. He continued Agathias's work. His 9-volume book named *Historia* includes the last years of the I. Justinos, II. Justinos, and II. Tiberius between 558 and 582. His compilation abounds in information on nomadic peoples of the western Eurasian Steppes, such as the Kutrigurs, Utigurs, Hephthalites, and Türks whom he calls with their contemporary names, avoiding classical anachronisms such as Huns or Scythians. Also, Menander preserved information on the Byzantines' relations with the Türks and the Persians as well as the famous Byzantine missions to the Western Türks led by Zemarchus in 569 Valentinus in 576.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> AALTO-PEKKANEN 1975, 1980.

<sup>20</sup> KAZHDAN 1991.

<sup>21</sup> MORAVCSIK 1983: 214-218; FREDO 1975.

<sup>22</sup> MORAVCSIK 1983: 539-540.

<sup>23</sup> MORAVCSIK 1983: 422-426; BLOCLEY 1985.

Theophylactus Simocatta belonged to the educated elite was born in Egypt. His work *Oikumenike Historia* (Οἰκουμένης ἱστορία) was written between 628 and 638 was the most significant source of Emperor Mauricius' reigning years. He continues the work of Menander Protector. In his historical account, there are two topics that prevail: the warfare against the Slavs and the Avars in the Balkans and the fight against the Persians on the eastern front. Simocatta, like Menander, preserves much information regarding the initial stages of the nomadic empire of the Türks in his famous excursus on the Scythians.<sup>24</sup>

Theophanes Confessor's most known work is *Chronographia* covering a period from 285-813. It describes the campaigns of Emperor Heraclius against the Persians and his alliance with the Khazars, who were subordinated to the Türks. Theophanes conveys the information that in the year 563 a delegation from the depths of the East, dispatched by the king of Kermichiones, Askel. These Kermichiones, according to Theophanes Byzantius, is the Persian rendering of the name of the Türks. Its Latin translation was completed after 873.<sup>25</sup>

Chronicon Paschale also should be mentioned among the chronicles. He wrote the history of the world up to 628 including Avar history under the emperor Heraclius.<sup>26</sup>

Nicephorus the Patriarch of Constantinople also left two small historical works; one known as the "Breviarium", the other the "Chronographis". His first work presents the years between 602 and 769 concerning the steppe history and the Türks.<sup>27</sup>

The Strategikon generally attributed to Byzantine Emperor Mauricius (539-602) is a source of war and tactics. It was possibly written in the late 6<sup>th</sup> century. The source consists of 12 chapters or books on various tactics that shaped the Byzantine army in the 6th and 7th centuries AD. It was to serve as a general guide or handbook to the Byzantine art of war. The Strategikon may have been written in an effort to codify the military reforms brought about by the soldier-emperor Mauricius. The source describes in detail weaponry and armor, daily life on the march or in camp, clothing, food, medical care, military law, and titles of the Byzantine army of the era. The eleventh mentions various enemies of the Byzantine Empire including Avars and the Türks.<sup>28</sup>

### **1.3. Medieval Syriac source - John of Ephesus**

The bishop of Ephesus was born in Amida of Asia Minor at the beginning of the 6th century. His most known work is the Ecclesiastical History, a work which consisted of 3 parts.

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<sup>24</sup> MORAVCSIK 1983: 544-548; WHITBY 1986.

<sup>25</sup> MORAVCSIK 1983: 531-537; TURTLEDOVE 1982; MANGO 1997.

<sup>26</sup> MORAVCSIK 1983: 241-243; WHITBY 1989.

<sup>27</sup> MORAVCSIK 1983: 456-459; MANGO 1990.

<sup>28</sup> DENNIS 1984.

Of these, the first one has been lost, while the second was preserved embedded in the work of Dionysius Tell Mahre (in the 3rd part of his chronicles). The third part of John of Ephesus's work, which is more important for the Türks was found in a monastery in the desert Skete, in Egypt near the border with Libya. John of Ephesus makes a reference to Zemarchus' delegation to the Türks. However, the most important piece of information he provides the modern reader with is that when in 584 the Avars sacked Anchialus, (modern Bulgaria) and the emperor was preparing the capital for a long siege, the Avars were forced to retreat to Sirmium due to attacks on their rear by the Türks. According to John of Ephesus, the Avars were obliged to buy off the disengagement of the Türks by paying 8 Kentinars of gold (1kentinar=100 liters, 1litre of gold=325 gr of gold) (260 kg. of gold). This confirms the information of the other Byzantine sources that the Byzantines had concluded a political, financial, military treaty with the Türks that also had affected the Balkan front.<sup>29</sup>

#### **1.4. Medieval Armenian source - Movses Kagankatvatsi or Movses Daskhurantsi**

Movses Kagankatvatsi or Daskhurantsi's work, called "The History of the Country of Albania" is a historical compilation about Caucasian Albania consisting of three volumes written in the medieval Armenian language. The second book covers the period between the mid-sixth and the mid-seventh century and narrates the Khazar invasions in Northern Armenia.

According to Movses, the Khazars entered Agavanie (southern modern Armenia) led by the Khazar qagan himself and his son and plundered Tchog and Barda, the latter being the capital of medieval Albania (Armenia). In the process, the Khazars entered Georgia and besieged Tiflis, which was their rallying point with Heraclius' armies. The work mentions both the eastern Türks and the western Türks.<sup>30</sup>

#### **1.5. Sogd sources**

According to János Harmatta, the Sogdian sources can be divided into two categories: The first category was the various translations of the different religious pieces of literature. The other group is the Sogd documents, which can also be distinguished by two subgroups. The older ones were so-called "old letters" from the 4<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>31</sup> The newer ones reach up to the 8<sup>th</sup> century. Mug Mountain documents are important documents of resistance against Arabs.<sup>32</sup> Besides this Bugut inscription was mentioned above separately.

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<sup>29</sup> DICKENS 2008: 34-55.

<sup>30</sup> DOWSETT 1961.

<sup>31</sup> <https://depts.washington.edu/silkroad/texts/sogdlet.html>: 10.11.2020.

<sup>32</sup> HARMATTA 1979.

### 1.6. Chinese sources

French sinologist and historian on Chinese history and religion, Chavannes has a very special place in the translation of the Chinese sources from the western world. He is the first expert to translate Sima Qian's *Records of the Grand Historian* into a western language. Chavannes's book published in 1913, is the main source of work with direct translations from Chinese sources.<sup>33</sup>

Another valuable work about the Chinese sources is the work of Liu Mau-Tsai, which translated Chinese sources into German. This work almost complements Chavannes's book. The author compiled Chinese sources from the first years when the Türks were mentioned in Chinese sources until the 11<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>34</sup>

Bielenstein has an important work on the dynastic histories which is a rather newer publication. He compiled the Chinese histories to give information about foreign states and tribes, their rulers, and their relations to China and each other. It includes the relevant passages of Chinese sources about the Türks and the other Turkic tribes.<sup>35</sup>

Taşağıl translated some Chinese sources on the Türks into Turkish.<sup>36</sup> Additionally, Twitchett translated relevant sources from the period of the Tang Dynasty period.<sup>37</sup>

One of the recent PhD works written by Hao Chen about the Second Türk Empire based on the Turkic inscriptions and Chinese sources help us to put main Chinese sources for our work together.<sup>38</sup>

**Zhou-shu:** Zhou-shu is the official history of the Chinese dynasty Northern Zhou. It was compiled by the Tang dynasty historian Linghu Defen and was completed in 629. It consists of 50 chapters, some of which have been lost and replaced by other sources. This is the first Chinese source to mention the Türks. The first part of the “foreigners” in the 50<sup>th</sup> volume starts with the Türks in which we can find the information before 572, legendary origins of the Türks, enthronement of Bumin, and his first relations with China was recorded.<sup>39</sup>

**Bei Qi-Shu:** First written by Li Delin, but after his death compiled by his brother Li Boyao (565–648) under imperial command in 636, this work covers the period from 534, when the Northern Wei split into the Eastern and Western Wei, to the overthrow of the Eastern Wei

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<sup>33</sup> CHAVANNES 1903.

<sup>34</sup> MAU-TSAI 1958.

<sup>35</sup> BIELENSTEIN 2005: 375-406.

<sup>36</sup> TAŞAĞIL 1999, 2003, 2004.

<sup>37</sup> TWITCHETT 1992.

<sup>38</sup> CHEN 2016.

<sup>39</sup> MAU-TSAI 2011: 29-32; TAŞAĞIL 2003: 2.

by the Northern Qi in 550, to the fall of the Northern Qi to the Northern Zhou in 577. We can find some information about the Türks in different chapters dispersedly.<sup>40</sup>

**Sui-shu:** Sui-shu is the official history of the Sui Dynasty. It was commissioned by Emperor Taizong of the Tang Dynasty, and written by a team of prominent scholars, including Yan Shigu, Kong Yingda, and Zhangsun Wuji, with Wei Zheng as the lead author. It was completed in 636 AD. Amongst the 85 scrolls, the 84<sup>th</sup> one includes the Türks and Western Türks chapters. Besides, it includes more data comparing the Türks and Western Türks chapters. It includes more data than the Zhou-shu.<sup>41</sup>

**Bei Shi:** The Bei Shi was compiled by Li Yanshou in 659. Consisting of 100 juan, this is a history of the Wei, Northern Wei, Eastern Wei, Qi, Zhou, and Sui beginning from 386 to 618. It contains 5 juan of annals for the Wei, 3 for the Qi, 2 for the Zhou, and two for the Sui. There are 88 juan of biographies. The Bei Shi does not have any monographs. In the 99<sup>th</sup> volume, one section belongs to the Türks which is almost identical with Zhou-shu 50 and Sui-shu 84.<sup>42</sup>

**Tongdian:** The Tongdian, which remains the most important source for Tang historians, was the model for a long series of institutional histories. Sequels to the Tongdian itself, and adaptations of its form, were written in later dynasties, often as officially sponsored projects by official historians. However, authoritative as the Tongdian was later to become, like the Zhengdian on which it had been modelled, it was originally a highly individual private history, a polemical work that propounded Du Yuo's vision of human history dominated by administrative, organizational, and institutional factors. The Tongdian was completed and presented to the throne in 801.<sup>43</sup> Du Yuo was a contemporary historian of the second Türk Empire and possible witness of some events happening between the Tang Dynasty and the Türks. From Chapter 197 to Chapter 200, the author dealt specifically with those inner nomads, such as the Türks and Uyghurs.<sup>44</sup>

**Jiu Tang-shu:** Jiu Tang-shu is the first official dynastic history of the Tang Dynasty (618-907). It was compiled under the direction of Liu Xu in 945, during the rule of Later Jin (936-946), one of the Five Dynasties. Consisting of 200 volumes, the first part of the 194<sup>th</sup> chapter mentions the Türks and the Western Türks.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> MAU-TSAI 2011: 32-35; TAŞAĞIL 2003: 3.

<sup>41</sup> CHAVANNES 2013: 41-48; MAU-TSAI 2011: 61-97; TAŞAĞIL 2003: 3.

<sup>42</sup> MAU-TSAI 2011: 54-56; TAŞAĞIL 2003: 3.

<sup>43</sup> TWITCHETT 1992: 105.

<sup>44</sup> CHEN 2016: 15; TAŞAĞIL 2003: 3; TWITCHETT 1992: 205.

<sup>45</sup> CHAVANNES 2013: 48-79; MAU-TSAI 2011: 177-254; CHEN 2016: 15; TAŞAĞIL 2003: 3-4.

**Cefu Yuan-gui:** Cefu Yuan-gui is the largest *leishu* (encyclopedia) compiled during the Chinese Song Dynasty (ad 960–1279). The work was started in 1005 and finished in 1013 by numerous scholars under the leadership of Wang Qinruo and Yang Yi. It has altogether 1102 small volumes. In some chapters, detailed data can be found about the Türks. Vol. 970 and Vol. 971 leave us rich information about the diplomatic interactions between Türk and other nomad tribes with China.<sup>46</sup>

**Xin Tang Shu:** Xin Tang shu is a work of official history covering the Tang Dynasty in which there are ten volumes and 225 chapters. The work was compiled by a group of scholars in the Song Dynasty era, led by Wuyang Xiu and Song Qi in 1060. The book was originally called the Tang-shu up to around the 18th century. While the first part of the 215<sup>th</sup> volume mentions the Eastern Türks, the second part explains the history of the Western Türks. Most of the information was probably copied from Tongdian.<sup>47</sup>

**Zizhi Tongjian:** In 1065 AD, the Song Emperor Yingzong ordered the historian Sima Guang (1019–1086 AD) to lead with other scholars to write the history of China. The Zizhi Tongjian published in 1084, in the form of a chronicle. It consists of the history of China from 403 BC to AD 959. In this period, the Türk Qaganate is also mentioned.<sup>48</sup>

**Tong Zhi:** The work created by Zheng Qiao in 1150, in the Song Dynasty, containing 200 chapters and contains a short family tree of the Türks.<sup>49</sup>

**Wenxian Tongkao:** The source was one of the models works of the Tongdian compiled by Ma Duanlin in 1254 but published in 1319. It has 348 volumes, the 343<sup>rd</sup> is about the Türks.<sup>50</sup>

### 1.7. Muslim sources

There is scanty and scattered information about the Türks in the Islamic sources. Moreover, it is difficult to obtain precise information about the time before the Hijrah, since these records were gathered much later. However, even in all this confusion, some information is encountered. Al-Tabari is the first of the Islamic sources mentioning the Türks. Al-Tabari is most famous as the supreme universal historian of the first three or four centuries of Islam, born in the winter of 224-5/839 at Amul, and died at Baghdad in 310/923. There is information about

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<sup>46</sup> CHAVANNES 2013: 258-275; CHEN 2016: 16; TAŞAĞIL 2003: 4.

<sup>47</sup> CHAVANNES 2013: 79-129; MAU-TSAI 2011: 254-355; CHEN 2016: 13; TAŞAĞIL 2003: 4; TWICHETT 1992: 201.

<sup>48</sup> CHEN 2016: 14.

<sup>49</sup> TAŞAĞIL 2003: 4.

<sup>50</sup> TAŞAĞIL 2003: 5.



the Türks in his History. For example, the name of the Western Türk qagan is mentioned in Tabari's history.<sup>51</sup>

Al-Baladhuri, one of the greatest Arabic historians of the 9<sup>th</sup> century. His History of the Muslim Conquests is the short version of a more comprehensive work on the same subject. In this work, the battles between Türks and Muslims in the Khorasan region were mentioned. The local Türk governors of the region asked help from the Türk Qaganate against the Muslims. Thanks to the support they could have stopped the raids from Muslims.<sup>52</sup>

Al-Yakubi, early Arab historian and geographer, in the second half of the 9th century. Three of Al-Yakubi's works have come down to us. The first in importance is the History which, describes the origins and history of the World. Also mentions the origin of the Türks. Al-Yakubi's other major work is the Book of Countries, which he completed in Egypt in 891, and which is administrative geography of the lands of Islam, of the Türks. Besides, this work is one of the first geographical books written by Muslims.<sup>53</sup>

Al-Masudi must have been born no later than some years before 893 in Baghdad. He was one of the greatest Muslim historians and travellers visiting many countries of his time. He travelled a lot in the Islamic world and even outside the Islamic lands. He wrote his book the Meadows of Gold in 943 in Fustat, Egypt. The book has two main chapters. In the first part of the work, it is world-history including the history Islam. The Türks were recorded among others. The *Admonition and Revision* is probably the last work of Al-Masudi and was compiled in the years 955-956. He mentions the Türks too several times.<sup>54</sup>

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Regarding our study, most of the literature was written in English, German, French, Russian, and Turkish. The first western author who studied the Eurasian Steppe History including the Türks was French de Guignes.<sup>55</sup> In his work, he wrote two different chapters for Eastern and Western Türks. Hungarian Pray György was influenced by de Guignes' work, and he quoted his study often. Besides, he added Byzantian sources such as Theophylaktos, Nicephorus, and Menander.<sup>56</sup> In the 1890's Parker, Bury, Barthold, and Marquart's first analyses appeared about the history of the Türks.<sup>57</sup> In 1912 Barthold published his great work

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<sup>51</sup> TEOI, Vol. X, 2000: 11-15. For translations of different parts of al-Tabari's work, see: AL-TABARI 1987, 1990a, 1990b, 1994.

<sup>52</sup> TEOI, Vol. I, 1986: 971, 972.

<sup>53</sup> TEOI, Vol. XI., 2002: 257-258.

<sup>54</sup> TEOI, Vol. VI., 1991: 784-789; MAÇOUDI 1861-1877.

<sup>55</sup> DEGUIGNES 1756-1758.

<sup>56</sup> PRAY 1761: 199; PRAY 1762: 73-82; PRAY 1764: 95-99.

<sup>57</sup> PARKER 1896; BURY 1897; BARTHOLD 1897; 1899; MARQUART 1898.

in Russian, which discussed the establishment of Muslim power in Central Asia in pre-Mongol times, and the main Arabic sources about the Türks. In 1923 Gibb wrote a new summary on this topic.<sup>58</sup> René Grousset published his review of the history of the Eurasian Steppe including a chapter on the Türks in 1939. The French original was translated into several languages.<sup>59</sup> Togan wrote *Umumi Türk Tarihine Giriş* (Introduction to Universal History of the Türks) which was one of the earliest works on the general history of Inner Asia in Turkish.<sup>60</sup> As a major milestone in Western science was the relevant chapter of *Handbuch der Orientalistik* written by the German historian, Bertold Spuler.<sup>61</sup> French historian Jean-Paul Roux devoted a fundamental work to the religion of the Türks, but he also attempted to provide the two millenniums of history of the whole Turkic history from the Pacific to the Black Sea. He gave a history and the culture of the Inner-Asian Türks in his work.<sup>62</sup> Another significant work of the 90s belongs to P.B. Golden, whose introduction to the history of Turkic people was translated into Turkish as well. He wrote in detail about the Türk Qaganate.<sup>63</sup> Vásáry wrote an important book on the general history of Eurasian nomads before the Mongol invasion.<sup>64</sup> In Soviet historiography Klyashtorny and Savinov discussed the steppe empires of Eurasia, in Russian.<sup>65</sup> Scharlipp wrote a book basically based on secondary literature, about the history of Inner Asia, especially on Türk and Uygur period in 1992.<sup>66</sup> Elçin Kürşat-Ahlers wrote a book on the social system of the nomadic empires, combining the German and Turkish scholarship, and investigating the early nomads of Eurasia from Scythians to the Türks.<sup>67</sup> David Christian's work "A History of Russia, Central Asia, and Mongolia, vol. I: Inner Eurasia from Prehistory to The Mongol Empire" contains the history of the Türk Empire too.<sup>68</sup> Soucek's book "A History of Inner Asia" includes the Türk chapter, and it was published in 2000.<sup>69</sup> Christopher I. Beckwith studies the history, cultures of ancient and medieval Central Asia. At the same time, he specializes in Asian language studies and linguistics, and the history of Central Eurasia. He has articles on the ethnonym Türk and great work on the Silk Road Empires.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> GIBB 1923.

<sup>59</sup> GROUSSET 1939; English translation GROUSSET 1970; Turkish translation GROUSSET 1983.

<sup>60</sup> TOGAN 1946.

<sup>61</sup> SPULER 1966.

<sup>62</sup> ROUX 1984: 37–129

<sup>63</sup> GOLDEN 1992, Turkish translation 2002.

<sup>64</sup> VÁSÁRY 1993; Turkish translation 2007.

<sup>65</sup> KLYASHTORNY–SAVINOV 1994.

<sup>66</sup> SCHARLIPP 1992.

<sup>67</sup> KÜRSAT-EHLERS 1994: 306–376.

<sup>68</sup> CHRISTIAN 2000.

<sup>69</sup> SOUCEK 2000.

<sup>70</sup> BECKWITH 2009.

In 1990 Dénes Sinor edited one of the most important works on the history of Inner Asia named “The Cambridge History of Early Inner Asia”. In which he has a chapter about the history of the Türk Qaganate.<sup>71</sup> UNESCO sponsored a project on the study of Central Asian history. The third volume of “History of Civilizations of Central Asia” discussed the period from middle of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century to 8<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>72</sup> In this volume, two great scholars Klyashtorny and Sinor wrote a chapter on the Türk Empire.<sup>73</sup> In the first year of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the third volume of the great work on the Turcology “*Philologiae Turcicae Fundamenta*” was published. After giving detailed linguistic information, it has an important chapter on the history of the Türks.<sup>74</sup> In 2001, Kazakh and Russian academics collaborated in a work about the history of Kazakhstan and Inner Asia. Part of the Türks was again made by Klyashtorny.<sup>75</sup> One of the major international projects of Turkey was the encyclopedia of “The Türks” which was published in English after following its Turkish version. There are special chapters that contributed to our work.<sup>76</sup>

Besides the general works, a few publications were made specifically on the history of the Türks. French René Giraud’s work was published in 1960, and in the following years, it was translated into Turkish. The work did not summarize the whole Türk history, but only the period described according to the runic inscriptions of the Türks, which contains the history of Türk Qaganate until the death of Bilge Qagan (682-734).<sup>77</sup> In 1964 S.G. Klyashtorny wrote a Russian book that provides a short and general history of the Türks based on the Orkhon Inscriptions.<sup>78</sup> Lev Nikolayevich Gumilev the Russian historian wrote the “Ancient Türks” in Russian in 1964 which was sharply criticized by his method.<sup>79</sup> Rásonyi’s work, published in Turkish in 1971 also must be mentioned.<sup>80</sup> In 2003, Zuev compiled a monograph on the Türks.<sup>81</sup> The Turkish scholar Ahmet Taşağıl wrote 3 volumes of work, based on Chinese sources, which were the basic impetus for my work.<sup>82</sup> The Hungarian scholar, Mihály Dobrovits has a special place in the history of Türks. His unpublished PhD work is one of the most important works

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<sup>71</sup> SINOR 1990.

<sup>72</sup> LITVINSKY–ZHANG–SAMGHABADI 1996.

<sup>73</sup> SINOR–KLYASHTORNY 1996.

<sup>74</sup> ROEMER–SCHARLIPP 2000.

<sup>75</sup> ABUSEITOVA–ALII 2001: 74–108, 130–153.

<sup>76</sup> HALAÇOĞLU 2002; English.

<sup>77</sup> GIRAUD 1960.

<sup>78</sup> KLYASHTORNY 1964.

<sup>79</sup> GUMILYEV 1964, Turkish translation 2002.

<sup>80</sup> RASONYI 1971.

<sup>81</sup> ZUEV 2003.

<sup>82</sup> TAŞAĞIL 2003; TAŞAĞIL 1999; TAŞAĞIL 2004.

was completed in 2004.<sup>83</sup> The most recently written historiographic work was made by a Russian colleague V. V. Tishin in 2015. His PhD work is on the historiography and the social history of the Türk Qaganate.<sup>84</sup> The Chinese Chen Hao wrote a PhD in Berlin about the history of the second Türk Qaganate combining the data from the Chinese sources and Turkic inscriptions.<sup>85</sup>

We should mention several authors who, although they did not write a monograph, contributed to the development of our knowledge of the Türks, with many important contributions. Alessio Bombaci wrote many relevant articles. Peter A. Boodberg also has numerous works on the Türks.<sup>86</sup> Louis Bazin's articles were published in a separate volume.<sup>87</sup>

In Hungarian literature, several excellent works paid attention to the Türks. Gyula Németh's summarizes their history in many places. In several works, Lajos Ligeti was also dealt with the question of the Türks. István Vásáry devoted a historical analysis to them. Czeglédý Károly paid attention to the Türks in many of his works.<sup>88</sup> Of the researchers of Hungarian history, József Deér mentions the Orkhon Inscriptions from the second half.<sup>89</sup> György Györffy and Jenő Szűcs have many works on the subject.<sup>90</sup> Although Ildikó Ecsedy does not have an independent monograph on this subject, her two study collections have a monographic value.<sup>91</sup> One of the most important recent works is Árpád Berta's book on the Orkhon and Uygur runic inscriptions. The work was published in the Turkish language too in 2010.<sup>92</sup>

Regarding the archaeology of the Türks in the area of Southern Siberia, D. G. Savinov published a book in 1984.<sup>93</sup> A new overview of the Western Türk Empire was published under A. Dosymbaeva, M. Zholdasbekov's editorship in Astana in 2013. The work was written in Russian includes visual and archaeological sources.<sup>94</sup> Sören Stark has many works on the history and cultural history of the Türks. In addition to these works, the book written on the history and the archaeology of the Türks in 2008 takes a special place.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> DOBROVITS 2003; DOBROVITS 2004; DOBROVITS 2004b; DOBROVITS 2005; DOBROVITS 2011.

<sup>84</sup> TISHIN 2015.

<sup>85</sup> CHEN 2016.

<sup>86</sup> BOODBERG/COHEN 1979b.

<sup>87</sup> BAZIN 1994a, 1994b.

<sup>88</sup> NÉMETH 1930; LIGETI 1986a, 1986b; VÁSÁRY 1983; CZEGLÉDY 1954; CZEGLÉDY 1963, 456–461; CZEGLÉDY 1969; CZEGLÉDY 1972; CZEGLÉDY 1974; CZEGLÉDY 1981a; CZEGLÉDY 1981b.

<sup>89</sup> DEÉR 1938: 15–26, 46–54.

<sup>90</sup> GYÖRFFY 1959; GYÖRFFY 1960; GYÖRFFY 1997; SZŰCS 1992.

<sup>91</sup> ECSÉDY 1979; ECSÉDY 1997.

<sup>92</sup> BERTA 2004; Turkish translation 2010.

<sup>93</sup> SAVINOV 1984.

<sup>94</sup> DOSYMBAEVA, ZHOLDASBEKOV 2013.

<sup>95</sup> STARK 2008.

Thomas J. Barfield's works based on Chinese sources have special importance for our work.<sup>96</sup> Michael R. Drompp on his one of the works focuses on the theories of imperial state formation which shed a light on our study. In addition to these, he has many works on the internal dynamics of the Türk Qaganate.<sup>97</sup> Nicola Di Cosmo whose works, are basically on relations between Inner Asian nomads and China, points many fundamental understandings.<sup>98</sup> Jonathan K. Skaff published an important book in 2012. This book takes a different perspective by re-examining relations between the Sui (581–618) and Tang (618–907) Empires and neighbouring pastoral nomadic peoples in the period from about 580 to 800.<sup>99</sup> One of the series *Bonn Contributions to Asian Archaeology* was published in 2015 in which we can find 21 articles related to nomad history and archaeology. Some of the articles have another importance for us indicating some imperial structure on the steppe empires and the Türks.<sup>100</sup> For the point of the military structure of the Türk Qaganate, David Graff has an important work in which "The Eurasian Way of War" chapter takes an important place.<sup>101</sup>

### 3. IMPORTANCE OF THE HISTORY OF THE TÜRK QAGANATE

The Türk Qaganate belongs to the great Eurasian Steppe empires which had a basic influence on the medieval world. From the middle of the sixth century for about 200 years it was the major power of Eurasia connecting China, Persia, India, and Byzantium. The history of the Türk Qaganate is essential basically from three aspects.

First of all, it is the first nomadic empire whose borders reach from Manchuria to the Black Sea, almost the whole Eurasian steppes. For the first time in history, a nomadic empire bordered simultaneously on three major sedentary civilizations: those of China, Iran, and the Western world represented by Byzantium.<sup>102</sup> (Map 1)

Secondly, they were the first Turkic speaking people to leave behind documents written in Turkic language. So, it is important for Altaic studies too.<sup>103</sup> The Türks are the earliest Inner Asian people whose language is well known and precisely datable.<sup>104</sup> Their language has been preserved in the Orkhon runic inscriptions. Besides its historical significance, it is the first Turkic language monuments in Turkic language history. They were carved for rulers, their

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<sup>96</sup> BARFIELD 1981; BARFIELD 1996

<sup>97</sup> DROMPP 1991; DROMPP 2005.

<sup>98</sup> DI COSMO 2002; DI COSMO 2003; DI COSMO 2015.

<sup>99</sup> SKAFF 2012.

<sup>100</sup> BEMMANN, SCHMAUDER 2015.

<sup>101</sup> GRAFF 2016.

<sup>102</sup> SINOR, KLYASHTORNY 1996: 327.

<sup>103</sup> SINOR, KLYASHTORNY 1996: 327.

<sup>104</sup> SINOR 1997a: 145.

ministers, but also for common people. This permits us to get a penetrant vision of the Old Turkic both tribal-social and imperial political-military structures.<sup>105</sup> The term Türk remained in use for different identities after the fall of the Türk Qaganate, and it became the denomination of a language family and a modern nation-state.<sup>106</sup> For the peoples of Inner Asia, the name Türk became, and has remained, the hallmark of the unity of peoples sharing a common language.<sup>107</sup>

Thirdly, the history and civilization of the Türks can be studied through a variety of written sources, including Chinese, Persian, Armenian, Greek, Latin texts, and Sogdian inscriptions, in addition to the indigenous Türk sources.<sup>108</sup>

### **3.1. Legendary origin of the Türks**

The birth of the founder of a dynasty is usually surrounded by miraculous elements. There are several legends concerning the origins of the Türks, all of them contain some supernatural, miraculous elements.<sup>109</sup>

Chinese sources recorded at least three different legends concerning the origin of the Türks.<sup>110</sup> The story of the origins of the Türk state is given in a variety of Chinese sources, the earliest of which is the Zhou-shu (composed ca. AD 629). It may have called the story of the abandoned child brought up by a wolf:

“The Tujue is a separate tribe of the Xiongnu. Their family name is A-shi-na. They formed an independent horde but were later attacked by a neighbouring state and all were destroyed except for a ten-year-old boy. When the soldiers of the enemy saw how young he was, they could not find the heart to kill him. Finally, they cut off his feet and threw him into a grass-covered swamp. Here a she-wolf lived who fed the lad with meat. He grew up and had relations with the she-wolf who, in the end, became pregnant. Then, when the king of the neighbouring state heard that the young man was still alive, he again sent his people to kill him. Since those commissioned with the task saw a she-wolf beside the young lad, they wanted to kill her as well. But she fled to a mountain north of the city of Gaochang. In this mountain, there was a cave, inside of which was plain that stretched for more than 100 li and was surrounded by mountains. The she-wolf hid in the mountains. Then, she gave birth to ten boys. When they grew up, they married women from outside and these brought forth children. Each of their progeny took a family-name. One of them called himself A-shi-na... After the passage

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<sup>105</sup> PRITSAK 1988: 751.

<sup>106</sup> SINOR 1997d: 223.

<sup>107</sup> SINOR 1994: 315, 316.

<sup>108</sup> SINOR, KLYASHTORNY 1996: 327.

<sup>109</sup> SINOR 1997c: 243.

<sup>110</sup> SINOR, KLYASHTORNY 1996: 329.

of some generations, they emerged from the cave and became the subjects of the Ruanruan. They lived on the southern slope of the Qinshan (Altai Mountains) and worked as blacksmiths for the Ruanruan...”<sup>111</sup>

This legend had a slight variant in the Bei Shi. There is another legend, also related in the Zhou-shu, which differs from the above-cited [legend], nevertheless, it shows that [the Türks] descended from a wolf.<sup>112</sup> A slightly different version of the same legend is told by the Bei Shi, completed ca. 659, and by the annals of the Sui Dynasty (581-617), the Sui-shu, compiled between 629 and 636. The text of the Bei Shi and the Sui-shu are almost identical word by word, but jointly they differ somewhat from the text of the Zhou-shu.<sup>113</sup>

The Zhou-shu contains another account which states that the Türks derived from the So country, north of the Xiongnu. They were led by A-pang-pu, who had 17 (or 70) brothers, one of whom, Yi-zhi-ni-shi-du, was born of a wolf. While his brothers were of limited mental capacity (and hence their lands were destroyed), Yi-zhi-ni-shi-du possessed the power to control the wind and rain. He married the daughters of the Spirit of Winter and Spirit of Summer. Of the four sons born to one of them, one changed into a white swan. The other three created separate polities, one founding a state, called Qi-gu, between the A-fu and Jian rivers, the other on the Chu-zhi River while the oldest son lived on the Jian-xi-qu-zhi Mountain. Here, the oldest son, having saved them by making fire, was elected leader over the other tribes also descended from A-pang-pu. He was Nuo-du-lu-shi (Šad) and he was given the title Türk. A-shi-na was the son of his concubine. After his father's death, he won a jumping contest and was elected leader with the title A-xian-shi (šad). The first Türk Qagan was Bumin/Tumen, son of Tu-wu (who bore the title Da-ye-hu, “Great Yabgu”), grandson of A-xian-shi and great-grandson of Nuo-du-lu.<sup>114</sup>

A third legend is preserved only in a collection of anecdotes; curious and miraculous histories probably compiled in 860 and entitled the Yu-yang ca-cu. According to this legend, which we may call ‘The Spirit of the Lake’, the ancestor of the Türks, who is called She-mo-she-li lived in a cavern, had a liaison with the daughter of the lake spirit. One day, as the Türks are preparing for a great hunt, the girl says to She-mo: ‘Tomorrow during the hunt a white deer with golden horns will come out from the cavern where your ancestors were born [author's emphasis]. If your arrow hits the deer we will keep in touch as long as you live, but if you miss

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<sup>111</sup> GOLDEN 1982: 42.

<sup>112</sup> SINOR, KLYASHTORNY 1996: 329.

<sup>113</sup> SINOR 1997d: 243.

<sup>114</sup> GOLDEN 1992: 118-119.

it our relationship will end.’ In the course of the hunt, a follower of She-mo kills the deer. She-mo angrily decapitates the culprit and orders that a human sacrifice is established in which a man of that follower’s tribe be beheaded. According to the Yu-yang ca-cu, the sacrifice remained in practice ‘to this day’.<sup>115</sup>

The Türks made use of a foundation tale to indicate divine favor for their people and their rulers.<sup>116</sup> It is the only indication that the Türks claimed supernatural favor besides invoking the name and power of Tengri and other numinous forces.

Chinese legends report that the Türks were a separate or independent branch of the Xiongnu originally living on the right bank of the “West Sea”. If the Caspian is, indeed, meant here, this would place the early Türk homeland to Western Eurasia.<sup>117</sup> The 7<sup>th</sup>-century Chinese dynastic annals, the Zhou-shu, Sui-shu, and Bei Shi, all contemporary accounts of the First Türk Qaganate (552-630 in the East, 552-659 in the West) report a number of fanciful ethnologic tales, presumably gotten from the Türks themselves or peoples close to them. “Independent branch” of the Xiongnu which had earlier lived around the “West Sea” probably in Eastern Turkestan, Mongolia, or Gansu.<sup>118</sup>

There is another possibility according to Chinese sources: their earliest history took place in Gansu which is a strategic territory to connect China with the Tarim Basin. Their later mention as blacksmiths of the Ruanruan in the Southern Altai remains in many respects fairly obscure.<sup>119</sup>

Chinese data, the earliest source Zhou-shu, concerning the origin of the Türks, records two traditions. The first of these sees in the Türk the descendants of the Xiongnu, a statement that may or may not be accurate. According to another tradition reported by the same source, the Türks’ ancestors originated in the state of Suo, to the north of the Xiongnu. The character *so* designating these people has the meaning of ‘rope, to bind’ and the So are called Suo-tou, i.e., “Suo-heads,” a term referring to their hairstyle. Shiratori refers to them as “Corded Heads” and remarks that they were so-called “because of the likeness of their queues to cords.” That they wore their hair long (loose or braided) is beyond doubt. In the Shi-shu the Türks are said to be mixed Hu from Ping-liang.<sup>120</sup> Unfortunately, the term Hu is capable of two interpretations: it may be used as generic for “Barbarians” or specifically may designate the Sogdians. The

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<sup>115</sup> SINOR, KLYASHTORNY 1996: 328.

<sup>116</sup> DROMPP 2015: 442.

<sup>117</sup> GOLDEN 1992: 117-118.

<sup>118</sup> GOLDEN 2016: 5.

<sup>119</sup> STARK 2006/2007: 163.

<sup>120</sup> SINOR 1994: 287, 288.



Tang-shu sees in the Türks a northern tribe of the Xiongnu. Reference to Xiongnu origins may be a stereotypic approach. Chinese sources viewed all northern Barbarians as descendants of the Xiongnu people as in Byzantine sources identified the nomads of later migrations such as Huns, Hungarians, or Mongols with Scythians, the first well-known nomads of Eastern Europe.<sup>121</sup>

The earliest information we have on Turkic peoples is connected with the Xiongnu, a powerful nomadic empire centered in Mongolia from about 200 BC, made life difficult for China for a while, and then collapsed by the mid-2<sup>nd</sup> century AD. The language of the Xiongnu cannot be identified at our present knowledge. It is without a doubt that they extended their rule over several Turkic-speaking tribal groupings.<sup>122</sup>

A less folkloric account (in the Sui-shu) derives the Türks from “mixed Hu barbarians” bearing the clan name A-shi-na, from the Gansu region. Their first appearance in the Chinese borderlands can be dated after 265 AD., a period of mass migrations of the Xiongnu and subject tribes from Southern Siberia and adjoining regions. In the course of frontier turbulence, in 439, the A-shi-na with some 500 families shifted to Xinjiang and by 460 had moved to the Southern Altai and became metal-working subjects of the Ruanruan.

The name A-shi-na, is probably East Iranian, perhaps Khotanese-Saka *âššeina/ âššena* ‘blue’ (cf. Sogdian *exšâna*, Old Pers. *Axšainnaka*, Avestan *axšaina*) or perhaps Tokharian *âšna* ‘blue’. This matches the usage *Kök-Türk* ‘Blue Türks’ or “Blues and Türks noted in the Türk Orkhon Inscriptions.<sup>123</sup> Beckwith derived the Turkic form *Aršilaš* from a Tokharian *Aršilaš* ‘noble kings’.<sup>124</sup>

## 4. HISTORY OF THE TÜRK QAGANATE

### 4.1. The First Türk Qaganate

As for the earlier history of the Türks, it can be reconstructed basically from Chinese sources. The first relations between Türks and China is mentioned in connection with the silk trade in 540.<sup>125</sup> The Türks definitely appeared in 542 and were officially recognized by the Western Wei State in China in 545.<sup>126</sup> According to Chinese sources, the First Türk Empire was established largely as a result of different factors. The Türks were the subjects of the Ruanruan

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<sup>121</sup> SINOR 1997a: 146.

<sup>122</sup> GOLDEN 2016: 4.

<sup>123</sup> GOLDEN 2016: 6.

<sup>124</sup> BECKWITH 2016: 39-46.

<sup>125</sup> VÁSARY 2007: 100.

<sup>126</sup> TAŞAĞIL 2008: 242.

empire. Around 546, the Türk ruler, Bumin (Tumen).<sup>127</sup> led a pre-emptive attack against the Tiele and defeated them. Then Tumen asked the Ruanruan Qagan A-na-gui for a royal princess in marriage for his service.<sup>128</sup> The Qagan's refused it saying: "You are my blacksmith slave. How dare you speak in this way?" It was an unfortunate step of the Ruanruan Qagan, as the Türks had already signaled their desire for greater autonomy through raids into China beginning sometime before 542 and then Bumin attempted to negotiate a trade arrangement with the Western Wei. This ultimately led to diplomatic exchanges with the Western Wei beginning in 545. When the Ruanruan Qagan refused Bumin as his son-in-law the next year, the latter made an independent marriage alliance with the Western Wei emperor in 551. These were all acts of insubordination that showed the Türks' increasing power and aspirations.<sup>129</sup> Shortly after Bumin attacked Ruanruans in 552. As a result, A-na-gui committed suicide and his son An-lo-chen went to Qi Dynasty to take asylum.<sup>130</sup>

Bumin died shortly after he had deposed A-na-gui. He was followed by his son Kuo-lo (Kara?). In 554 Kara won a victory over the Ruanruans before he also died, succeeded by his younger brother Yandou, who held the title of an Erkin and took the ambitious title "God(like) Mukan Qagan".<sup>131</sup> On his death, the government of the newly created Türk Qaganate was divided between Bumin's other son Mukan (553-572) and İstemi (553-?), the brother of the late Bumin i.e., Mukan's uncle. Mukan ruled over the eastern part of the empire, centered on Mongolia, while İstemi was in charge of the western areas. Thus, it can be said that almost from the moment of its inception, the Türk Qaganate was bicephalous.<sup>132</sup>

Uncle and nephew embarked on a series of military campaigns. In the east, this brought victory over the Khitans and the incorporation of the Kirgiz into the Türk state.<sup>133</sup> The Hephthalite state was destroyed between 557 and 561 through the joint action of the Türk Qagan İstemi and Khosrow I. Anushirvan, king of the Sassanid Persia. Cooperating between the Sassanids and the Türks was not uniformly harmonious, though their alliance was strengthened by Khosrow's marrying a daughter of the Türk ruler.<sup>134</sup> Through their conquests, the Türks now controlled large sections of the trade routes to the west. The Sogdian merchants became the subjects of the Türks and they wished to take advantage of the lucrative silk trade formerly

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<sup>127</sup> On the name \*Tumīn, written Tu-men, and the Old Turkic inscriptional form Bumin with the title Illig Qagan.

<sup>128</sup> BECKWITH 2009: 114.

<sup>129</sup> DROMPP 2005: 103.

<sup>130</sup> VÁSARY 2007: 101.

<sup>131</sup> STARK 2016: 2129.

<sup>132</sup> SINOR, KLYASHTORNY 1996: 332.

<sup>133</sup> SINOR, KLYASHTORNY 1996: 332.

<sup>134</sup> SINOR 1994, 301; İstemi's daughter's name was Fakim according to the Islamic sources (Tabari, Masudi). This woman became the Sassanid empress (TAŞAĞIL 2002: 325)

dominated by the Hephthalites. Transoxiana, part of Fergana, Kashgar, Khotan, and important cities of Western Turkestan came under Türk rule.<sup>135</sup> The territorial expansion of the Türk empire reached Crimea in the west.<sup>136</sup> Thus, the famous Silk Road and the Sogdians dealing with trade on this road came under the control of İstemi Yabgu.<sup>137</sup> At some time before 568, the Türks sent a trading mission of Sogdian merchants led by the Sogdian Maniakh to the Persian Empire to request permission to sell their silks in Persia. The Persians bought the silk but burned it publicly in front of the merchants. The offensive answer prompted the Türks to send another mission, but this time the Persians poisoned them, in violation of the time-honored law of international diplomatic immunity. A state of war was inevitable from that point on between Türks and Persians.<sup>138</sup> After their attempts to establish commercial footholds in Persia met with failure, they aimed to bypass Persia and establish direct links with Byzantium, one of the main markets of silk products.<sup>139</sup>

The first Türk embassy we know arrived in Constantinople, the capital of Byzantium in 568.<sup>140</sup> According to Theophanes, it had been dispatched by a certain Askel, the ruler of the Khormikhion which can be identified with the Western Türks. The Persians called them by that name. The importance of Askel's mission pales beside that of the embassy led by Maniakh arriving in Constantinople at the end of 568 and presenting to Emperor Justinos II its credentials were written in "Scythian script". Though it was quite clear to all concerned that the aims of this embassy were more ambitious than those of a mere trade delegation, Justinos II - who received the Türks with much attention - took care to have them see local sericulture, a possible hint that Byzantium was not all that much dependent on imports. According to Menander, the Türk ruler represented by Maniakh was Silziboulos, a name for which no adequate explanation has been given. It is generally believed that Silziboulos and İstemi were one and the same person. Menander asserts that Silziboulos was the most powerful among the four Qagans. Maniakh's mission proved to be an unqualified success and led to the dispatch of the first Byzantine embassy to the Türks.<sup>141</sup>

On his return journey, Maniakh was accompanied by a Byzantine counter-embassy led by the Zemarchus, who was, in his turn, very well received by Silziboulos.<sup>142</sup> Other diplomatic

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<sup>135</sup> SINOR, KLYASHTORNY 1996: 332.

<sup>136</sup> STARK 2016: 2129.

<sup>137</sup> TAŞAĞIL 2002: 325.

<sup>138</sup> BECKWITH 2009: 116.

<sup>139</sup> SINOR, KLYASHTORNY 1996: 332.

<sup>140</sup> GOLDEN 1992: 128.

<sup>141</sup> SINOR 1994: 302-303.

<sup>142</sup> DOBROVITS 2008: 67-78; DOBROVITS 2011: 373-409.

exchanges followed until 572 when, on his second mission to the Türks, the Byzantine envoy Valentinus was received by Turxath (perhaps Türk šad), son of the just deceased Silziboulos. In a sign of mourning, members of the Byzantine delegation were not only requested to lacerate their faces but were given a bitterly hostile reception by Turxath, who accused the Byzantine emperor of treason of having given asylum to the Avars. At that time the principal ruler of the Western Frontier Region of the Türk Qaganate was Tardu, a son of Ištemi, whose year of accession is unknown, although it cannot have been later than 572 since it was to him that the irate Turxath sent Valentinus.<sup>143</sup>

In the period between 568 and 576 diplomatic contacts were frequent; Menander mentions five Roman embassies to the Türks.<sup>144</sup>

In 572 Mukan Qagan died in the east and was succeeded by his younger brother who ruled with the title “God(like)” Maga Taspar Qagan (572-581). Slightly later, in 576, Ištemi also passed away and his son, Tardu (called Da-tou in the Chinese sources) assumed leadership of the western wing of the Türks.<sup>145</sup> Taspar having converted to Buddhism embarked on an ambitious program of building monasteries and sponsoring the translation of Buddhist canonical works, presumably from Chinese into Sogdian and Turkic.<sup>146</sup>

#### **4.2. Division of the Türk Qaganate**

Türks divided into two because of the skilful policy of the Chinese in 582. In the Eastern Türk realm, based in the Eastern Steppe and western Manchuria, Mukan Qagan was succeeded by his younger brother Taspar Qagan (572-581). In the Western Turkic realm, Ištemi was succeeded by his son Tardu (576-603). By 583 Tardu was known as the Yabgu Qagan of the Western Türks. His empire comprised the northern Tarim Basin, Jungaria, Transoxiana, and Tokharistan.<sup>147</sup> From that time Eastern and Western Türks recorded in different chapters in the Chinese sources (Tang-shu - Jiu Tang-shu). Western Türks were noted as ‘ten arrows’<sup>148</sup> or ‘Yabgu Türks’.<sup>149</sup>

Taspar Qagan was the last surviving son of Bumin Qagan. When Taspar died in 581, his son An-luo did not enjoy enough prestige among the Türks to successfully make his bid for supreme leadership. He was quickly outmaneuvered by his two senior rivals, She-tu, son of Kara (Yixiji) Qagan, with his headquarters south of the Gobi in lucrative proximity to China,

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<sup>143</sup> SINOR, KLYASHTORNY 1996: 333.

<sup>144</sup> SINOR 1994: 304.

<sup>145</sup> STARK 2016: 2130.

<sup>146</sup> SINOR, KLYASHTORNY 1996: 333.

<sup>147</sup> BECKWITH 2009: 117.

<sup>148</sup> Five Nu-shi-bi were living in the West of the Issik Lake and Five Tu-lu in the east.

<sup>149</sup> VÁSARY 2007: 103.

and Da-luo-bian, son of Mukan, who had his base in the so-called “Northern Headquarters”. For a short time, She-tu succeeded as supreme qagan, assuming the title *El Külüg Šad Maga Išbara Qagan* (mostly known as *Shabolüe*), with Da-luo-bian (*Apa Qagan*) and An-luo being lesser qagans. In 582 Tardu refused to join Išbara’s army in a campaign against the Sui. The following year tension between Apa and Išbara escalated into open conflict and in 583 Apa was forced to seek refuge with his uncle Tardu, son of Ištemi and qagan over the Western Türk. Tardu supported Apa with ten *tümen*. The following year, even Išbara was forced to turn to China for help, leaving him no choice but to declare himself a vassal of the Sui something previously unheard of from any Türk ruler.<sup>150</sup>

Obsessed with the desire to have a state of his own, Apa Qagan then turned against his former ally Tardu, chased him from his domain, and established the state of the Western Türks as opposed to that of the eastern parts controlled by Išbara.<sup>151</sup>

After Išbara’s death (587), supreme rule over the eastern wing passed to his younger brother Chu-luo-hou, who resided south of the Gobi Desert and assumed the title *Maga Qagan*. *Maga Qagan* must have been an energetic and skilled ruler, as he finally managed to capture Apa in the same year. But he lost his life while on a campaign against Sassanids in Herat (588).<sup>152</sup>

With Chinese support Yongyulü, son of Išbara and previously *Yabgu Qagan* (that is a lesser qagan) of the northeast, managed to establish himself as senior qagan of the eastern wing (with the title *Du-lan Qagan*). But in order to avoid a renewed concentration of power in a single person among the Türks in the east, the Sui were quick to give additional support to the son of Chu-luo-hou, Rangan (as *Tuli Qagan*), by granting him a Chinese princess in marriage, supplying him with a lot of money and building him a new residence at the Türk’s old center of power south of the Gobi Desert.<sup>153</sup>

In 585 Tardu fled to the Sui court; nothing further is known of his activities until 594, when he reappeared in a conflict with the Eastern Türk Qagan, Yongyulü (588-599). It seems likely that the Türk qagan who, in 598, wrote a letter to the Byzantine emperor Maurice describing himself as ‘lord of the seven races, master of the seven climes’ was Tardu.<sup>154</sup>

Well calculated by Sui diplomacy, the preferential treatment of Rangan soon led to a falling out between Rangan and Du-lan who perceived such treatment a violation of the rank as

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<sup>150</sup> STARK 2016: 2131.

<sup>151</sup> SINOR, KLYASHTORNY 1996: 333-334.

<sup>152</sup> STARK 2016: 2131.

<sup>153</sup> STARK 2016: 2131.

<sup>154</sup> SINOR, KLYASHTORNY 1996: 333-334.

senior qagan of the east. Finally, Rangan was forced to seek refuge in the Ordos south of the Yellow River, where he was given pasture grounds and the title Yili Zhendou Qimin as puppet qagan by the grace of the Sui.<sup>155</sup>

In the west, Tardu was able to return from exile in Sui territories to his former home base. In the following years, he appeared as an ally of Du-lan Qagan in the east. But Tardu could only re-establish control over the western part of his former realm (i.e., the Chu and Talas area), while the eastern part was still controlled by a member of the house of Mukan, namely Apa's nephew who took the title Nili Qagan and had his headquarters in the Ili region. In 595, after a victory over Du-lan Qagan in the east, Nili made a bid for supreme power among the Türk, proclaiming himself 'great qagan' and even sending an embassy to Constantinople, but he appeared to have died shortly afterward in 598 or 599.

This was a turning point for the fortunes of Tardu, and after the unexpected murder of Du-lan Qagan in the east in 599 he was suddenly in a position to aspire to supreme rule among the Türk and adopted the title Bilge Qagan. To assert his claim, he started to raid Sui territories and pressed on his only remaining rival qagan, Rangan, who was soon forced to flee to the Sui who subsequently installed him as puppet qagan at Dali (south of present-day Hohhot in Inner Mongolia). However, Tardu's aspirations came to a sudden end in 603 when a large-scale Tiele uprising forced him to flee to the Tuyuhun, after which nothing more is heard of him.

From then on, the Türk remained politically divided into two competing polities. Supreme rule over the east remained with the offspring of Maga Qagan from the house of Kara, and until his death in 609. Qimin Qagan proved to be a faithful subject of the Sui. In the west, the son of Nili, Daman, ascended the throne as Chu-luo Qagan but proved unable to cope with another Tiele uprising (in 605). In 611 Daman was finally forced to take permanent refuge at the Chinese court, leaving the throne to She-gui. From now on, supreme rule over the Western Türk remained with members of the house of Ištemi.<sup>156</sup>

Both the Eastern and the Western Türks profited greatly from the rapid decline of Sui hegemony after 612, regaining considerable strength. In the east, the son of Qimin, Shibi Qagan, adopted a hostile attitude toward China and resumed raiding the Chinese borderlands. Li Yuan finally established the Tang Dynasty in 618 but remained tributary to the Eastern Türks throughout his reign as emperor. Thus, after Shibi had died in 619, this newly strengthened polity was, for the time being, continued by his younger brothers: first, briefly, Chu-luo Qagan,

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<sup>155</sup> STARK 2016: 2131.

<sup>156</sup> STARK 2016: 2132.

and then Illig (Xieli) Qagan who ruled the Eastern Türk from 620 to 634.<sup>157</sup> The second Tang emperor, Taizong defeated Xieli who was taken as a prisoner, died in China. With his death, darkness would descend on the Eastern Türk Empire for half a century.<sup>158</sup> Eastern Qaganate had effectively comes to an end. Members of the A-shi-na and other high-ranking clans were encouraged to enter the Tang service. Some groups were settled in China.<sup>159</sup>

Meanwhile in the Western Türks She-gui died in 618. His successor, Tong Yabgu (Tong Yehu) Qagan, turned his attention particularly to the rich oasis territories in the west - to Sogdia and Tokharistan. In Tokharistan he established his son Tardu as yabgu. He successfully widened the territory of Western Türks.<sup>160</sup> Türk's involvement in Iranian affairs continued under Tong Yabgu (619-630), qagan of the Western Türks, an ally of Emperor Heraclius against Khosrow II. Tong Yabgu received the Chinese pilgrim Xuanzang, who was duly impressed by the magnificence of the Türk court. However, pride and unbridled ambition caused Tong Yabgu's downfall. In the words of the Tang-shu, he was no longer 'good to his people and the tribes hated him' and he fell victim to a revolt led by the Qarluqs. The Western Türk Qaganate, which was less bothersome for the Chinese, was left to its own devices of self-destruction. He-lu, the last de facto ruler of the Western Türks, was captured by the Chinese in 657 and died two years later, to be buried beside Xieli.<sup>161</sup>

### **4.3. Interregnum period**

Around one hundred thousand Türk went to China after the collapse of the state. But the large group of migrants in northern China worried all Chinese statesmen, mainly the emperor Taizong, the emperor of the Tang Dynasty. Tuli Qagan's brother Jie-shi-shuai had gone to China in 629 and took a Chinese title as palace guardian general. Then he planned an assassination to Chinese emperor Taizong. But after his unsuccessful attempt, he was captured and killed by the Wei River while trying to cross it. As a result of this event, all the viziers told the emperor that it was not possible for Türks to live in China, for the sake of their country's safety. Then Türks were expelled and settled in the North of China. Meanwhile, the most important power in Ötüken region was Xueyantuo (Sir Tarduš). However, when their leader Inan Qagan died the Xueyantuo force collapsed in 645.<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> STARK 2016: 2132.

<sup>158</sup> SINOR, KLYASHTORNY 1996: 334.

<sup>159</sup> GOLDEN 1992: 134.

<sup>160</sup> STARK 2016: 2133.

<sup>161</sup> SINOR, KLYASHTORNY 1996: 334-335.

<sup>162</sup> TAŞAĞIL 2002: 330-334.

#### 4.4. The Second Türk Qaganate

After the First Türk Empire had been defeated by the emperor Taizong in 630, the Eastern Türk tribes were resettled north of the Ordos and Shanxi. Taizong drafted his new subjects into the service of the Tang Empire. Türk inscriptions in honor of Kül Tegin (732) notes with disapproval, when speaking of those times, that the Türk begs abandoned their Türk titles. The begs who went to China held Chinese titles, obeyed the Chinese emperor; they served him for fifty years.<sup>163</sup>

The man who united the Türks was Elterish (Qutlug) (682-92), scion of the A-shi-na clan, a distant descendant of the late Xieli Qagan.<sup>164</sup>

The Türk uprising in 679-681 was at first unsuccessful, although it led, in 682, to the withdrawal of Qutlug Čor, one of the Türk leaders of the qagan tribe of the A-shi-na, into the Gobi Desert. Once they had established themselves in the Yinshan Mountains (Čogay Quzi in ancient Turkic), Qutlug Čor and his closest comrade-in-arms, Tonyuquq, succeeded in winning the support of most of the Türks and conducted successful military operations against the imperial forces in Shanxi between 682 and 687. Qutlug Čor proclaimed himself Elterish qagan, and in so doing ushered in the resurgent Türk Empire.

In 687 Elterish Qagan left the Yinshan Mountains and turned his united and battle-hardened army to the conquest of the Türk heartlands in central and northern Mongolia. Between 687 and 691 the Toquz Oguz tribes and the Uygurs, who had occupied these territories, were routed and subjugated; their chief, Abuz Qagan, fell in battle. The center of the Second Türk Empire shifted to the Ötüken mountains (now called the Khangai Mountains), on the rivers Orkhon, Selenga, and Tola. Having united two powerful tribal groups under his command – the Türks and the Toquz Oguz – Elterish Qagan was now a dangerous menace to the Tang Empire.

In 691 Elterish Qagan died and was succeeded by his younger brother, who assumed the title Kapgan Qagan ('Conquering Qagan'; Mochuo in Chinese sources). His reign (691-716) marked the apogee of the military and political might of the Second Türk Empire – and the beginning of its decline.<sup>165</sup>

The long-reigning period of Kapgan Qagan was the brightest time of the Second Türk Empire.<sup>166</sup> Between 693 and 706 Kapgan's army forced a crossing of the Huang-he which the Chinese forces could offer no effective resistance. The Empress Wu paid vast indemnities to

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<sup>163</sup> SINOR, KLYASHTORNY 1996: 335.

<sup>164</sup> SINOR 1994: 310.

<sup>165</sup> SINOR, KLYASHTORNY 1996: 335-338.

<sup>166</sup> VÁSARY 2007: 120.



Kapgan and sent him gifts, which were in effect thinly disguised tributes. In 696-697, Kapgan subjugated the Khitan tribes and sealed an alliance with the Tatabi. Between 698 and 701 the northern and western frontiers of Kapgan's state were defined by the Tannu Ola, Altai, and Tarbagatai Mountain ranges. After defeating the Bayirku tribe in 706-707, the Türks occupied lands extending from the upper reaches of the Kerulen to Lake Baikal. In 709-710, the Türk forces subjugated the Az and the Chik (tribes living in Tannu Tuva), crossed the Sayan Mountains (the Kögmen yiš in Turkic texts), and inflicted a crushing defeat on the Yenisei Kirgiz. The Kirgiz ruler, Bars Beg fell in battle; his descendants were to remain vassals of the 'qagan of the Ötüken Mountains' for several generations.

In 711 the Türk forces, led by Tonyuquq, crossed the Mongolian Altai, clashed with the Türgish army in Jungaria, on the River Boluchu, and won an outright victory. Tonyuquq forced a crossing over Sir Darya in pursuit of the retreating Türgish, leading his troop to the border of Tokharistan. However, in battles with the Arabs near Samarkand, the Türk forces were cut off from their rear services and suffered considerable losses; they had difficulty in returning to the Altai in 713-714. There they reinforced the army that was preparing to besiege Beshbalik (Bei-ting).

The Khitans and the Tatabi seceded, and first the Qarluqs then all the Toquz Oguz tribes revolted. The Toquz Oguz were defeated in five battles in 715, but the revolt was not crushed. The following year, the Great Erkin of the Bayirku tribes fell on Kapgan's headquarters on the Tola River.<sup>167</sup>

Kapgan's glorious reign ended abruptly on 22 July 716 when - neglecting elementary precautions - he was ambushed and killed by Bayirku.<sup>168</sup>

The ensuing war of succession between the son of Kapgan on the one side, and the two sons of Elterish on the other, threw the Qaganate into chaos.

Kapgan's retainers, his son Bögü came to power. Kül Tegin, who was the hero of many battles and popular with the forces and enjoyed the support of all the influential Türk families, attacked the headquarters. He killed Bögü Qagan and many of Kapgan's retainers and then set on the throne his elder brother, known as Bilge Qagan ('Wise Qagan'), who ruled from 716 to 734.<sup>169</sup>

After the death of Kapgan, the Türgish leader Suluk proclaimed himself qagan. The Khitan and Tatabi tribes refused to pay tribute; the Oguz revolt continued, and the Türk tribes

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<sup>167</sup> SINOR, KLYASHTORNY 1996: 338-339.

<sup>168</sup> SINOR 1994: 312.

<sup>169</sup> SINOR, KLYASHTORNY 1996: 339.

themselves began to rebel. Bilge Qagan offered the throne to his brother, Kül Tegin. Kül Tegin was put at the head of the army, and the septuagenarian Tonyuquq, who enjoyed great authority among the tribes, became the qagan's closest adviser. Bilge and Kül Tegin now attacked the Uygurs; the route of the Uygurs broke the resistance of the Toquz Oguz tribes and the rich spoils heartened the Türk forces. In the summer of 718 Bilge crushed the Tatabi and the Khitans and regained possession of the Khingan. The detachment led by Tudun Yamtar, one of Bilge's captains attacked the Qarluq tribes, forced them to submit, and took vast herds of horses, which were distributed among the tribes loyal to Bilge.

In 718 those Türk and Oguz tribes which had fled to China during the time of internecine strife in 716 returned to Bilge's empire.<sup>170</sup>

In 720 the Chinese army, whose main attacking force was the cavalry of its confederates – the Basmil, Khitan, and Tatabi tribes – advanced on the Ötüken mountains in two directions. Tonyuquq's army met the Basmils and defeated them, taking Beshbalik as they pursued the defeated tribe. In 721 Xuanzang immediately accepted the new peace proposals.

The war of 720-721 was the last between the Second Türk Empire and China. Bilge Qagan does not fail to mention in Kül Tegin's epitaph: 'I made peace with the Chinese people; they gave us gold, silver, and silk in abundance'. In the year 727 alone, the Chinese emperor gave Bilge Qagan a 'present' of 100,000 pieces of silk in return for a symbolic 'tribute' of 30 horses. And it was not until 734 that the Chinese participated in a war between the Khitans and the Tatabi, siding with the latter; Bilge Qagan, fearing for his eastern frontier, fought against the Tatabi and defeated them. There were no direct confrontations between Chinese and Türk forces.

The winter of 723-724 was a hard one for the Türk: they lost most of their cattle because of the icy conditions.

In 732 Bilge Qagan entered the sixteenth year of his reign. 'By the grace of Heaven and because of good fortune and propitious circumstances, I brought back to life the dying people, the naked people I clothed, and I made the few many'.<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>170</sup> SINOR, KLYASHTORNY 1996: 340.

<sup>171</sup> SINOR, KLYASHTORNY 1996: 341.

#### 4.5. The decline of the Qaganate

In 731 Kül Tegin died and in 734 Bilge Qagan was poisoned. They opened the final chapter for the Türk Empire rule in Central Eurasia.<sup>172</sup> Near the River Orkhon, in the Kosho-Tsaidam basin between the mountains, monuments were erected to both brothers with inscriptions that chronicled the turbulent history of the Second Türk Empire.

Bilge Qagan's wife, Po-fu, the daughter of Tonyuquq, attempted to run the state for his underage sons, Yi-zhan Qagan (734) and Teng-li (Tengri, 734-741). The dynasty was toppled by a coalition of Basmils, Qarluqs, and Uygurs in 742. The Basmil chieftain, Ozmış (Chin. Wu-su-mi-shi) was proclaimed Qagan, only to be toppled in 744 by a Uygur-led coalition, joined by the Qarluqs and Oguz.<sup>173</sup> In 745 the Second Türk Qaganate ceased to exist. The last reference to them relates to the year 941 in Chinese sources.<sup>174</sup>

#### 5. THE ETHNONYM TÜRK

In AD 552 a new empire was built in Inner Asia and those people were called Türk. After the discovery of the Orkhon Inscriptions, the origin of the name Türk became a discussion point for many years. Some scholars date back the name Türk much earlier than the emergence of the Türk Qaganate.

The first mention dates back to the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC. Herodotus mentions Iyrkae people living north of the Black Sea. Usually, this information is discarded with the argument that the forms are corrupt and Herodotus has the wrong form of the Tyrcae. The argument most often heard against the identification namely that the Latin forms cannot be correct because Türks appear much later and in a different part of the world is fallacious.<sup>175</sup> But Golden and Sinor, does not see any problem that the possibility of a Turkic presence this far west at this early date. Sinor explains his opinion as follows: "I see no compelling reason to impugn the Latin data. The presence of Turkic-speaking peoples in the Pontic Steppe and in the forest belt to the north of it is well established in the fifth century i.e., well before the Türks' appearance in Mongolia, and Mela's information would simply testify to such presence at an earlier period".<sup>176</sup>

According to French Orientalist G. de Rialle (1875) people called *Turcae-Tyrcae* 'Türks' are mentioned in the first century AD by Pomponius Mela and Pliny the Elder as the

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<sup>172</sup> STARK 2016: 2132.

<sup>173</sup> GOLDEN 1992: 138.

<sup>174</sup> SINOR, KLYASHTORNY 1996: 341.

<sup>175</sup> GOLDEN 1992: 116; KAFESOĞLU 2014: 12.

<sup>176</sup> SINOR, 1994: 285, 287.

name of a people living in Scythian area, the forest north of the Sea of Azov.<sup>177</sup> On the other hand, Hammer (1832) relates the name Togharma on the Old Testament with Türks. V. de St. Martin and Marquart composed the *Trukha* or *Truska* with the name Türk. Also, the name *Turukku* of Assyrian documents might have had a relation with the name Türk.<sup>178</sup> There are some uncertain references, ca. 420 in Persian traditions, to Türks. John of Antioch mentions a certain *Tourgouv*, in whose name some would see Türk-Hun or Türkün. Hephthalite metarials note *Topko* which has also been interpreted as Türk.<sup>179</sup>

The ethnic name Türk was first written by their sedentary neighbour Chinese in the form of Tujue in Zhou-shu in AD 542.<sup>180</sup> This name was used by the Chinese for a long time. According to Róna-Tas reconstruction of this name is the Chinese transcription of a foreign form *türküt*. And he adds: “Although some thought that this form was a form of ethnic name Türk with Turkic or Mongol plural ending, this form didn’t pass into Chinese from the Türks but via the Sogdians.”<sup>181</sup> For nearly a century by many scholars the dominant interpretation of the Chinese name of the Türks Tujue, has been that it represents the transcription of a plural form *Türküt*, reconstructed as Türk plus a Mongolian or Sogdian plural suffix *-t*. But Beckwith doesn’t agree on the plural *-t* form of Türk name and he says: “The name Türk in Greek, Arabic, Tibetan, and many other languages, there are no transcriptions like Türküt or Türkit.”<sup>182</sup> Clauson, among others, however, rejected this on a number of grounds, viewing the original form of this ethnonym as *Türkü*. Tekin reads it as *Türük* and *Türk*.<sup>183</sup>

Chinese chronicles adjust the meaning of ‘Türk’ in their own language ‘helmet’. The Annals of Sui Dynasty (636-656) state that the ancestors of the Türks settle in the Altai Mountains, where they specialized in the occupation of metal forging. Since the Altai Mountains look like a helmet, and this ‘helmet’ in their language sounds like *türk*, this is why they called themselves by this name. Róna-Tas pointed out that no Turkic language has been found which has a word meaning or anything similar which sounds remotely like *türk*. By contrast, the word for ‘lid’ in Saka is *tturaka*.<sup>184</sup> J. Klaproth (1826) explained Tujue with *takye*, J. Schmidt (1824) with *dugulga* ‘helmet’, Gobelentz (1837) and Schott (1849) with Persian *targ* ‘helmet’, J. J. Hess (1918).<sup>185</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> BECKWITH 2006/2007: 10.

<sup>178</sup> KAFESOĞLU 2014: 12.

<sup>179</sup> GOLDEN 1992: 116.

<sup>180</sup> MAU-TSAI 1958: 28.

<sup>181</sup> RÓNA-TAS 1999: 279.

<sup>182</sup> BECKWITH 2005: 14.

<sup>183</sup> GOLDEN 1992: 117.

<sup>184</sup> RÓNA-TAS 1999: 281.

<sup>185</sup> KAFESOĞLU 2014: 21.

Beckwith suggested a new explanation for the name Tujue: The remainder of the syllable written with *-jue* must be read as *-war*. The transaction of Tujue must be *türkwar*. Tujue is thus a clear transcription of a foreign *türk-wač*, a compound consisting of the name *Türk* plus the word *wač/Bač* ‘ruler, lord’. It means “Rulers of the Türk” or “the Türk Rulers”.<sup>186</sup>

Beckwith supports his offer with another article based on a Frankish source ‘Chronicle of Fredegar’. According to a Frankish legend, Franks and Türks had a Trojan origin. When they crossed the Danube, the group split into two, one of which became the *Franci* ‘Franks’, who took their name from the name of their king, *Francio*. The other group, the *Torci*, *Turci*, or *Turchi* ‘Türks’, took their name from the name of their king, *Torquotus*, *Turquotus* or *Torcoth*.

Beckwith reads this Frankish name as *Türkwot*, and according to him the Frankish name for the ‘king of the Türks’, *Türkwot*, is remarkably close to the Chinese name for the Türks, Tujue-türkwač, ‘ruler of the Türk’. He also claims that the Greek text of Menander also specifies *Tourkoath-Türkwath*. The agreement of Chinese, Greek, and Latin (Frankish) makes it clear *Türkwat-Türkwac* the title of ‘ruler of the Türk’.<sup>187</sup>

The first Türk delegation we know arrived in Constantinople in 563, and the relations between 563-576 were very frequent. From then on, the Byzantine sources refer to the Eastern European Turkic peoples as *Turkoi*. The name first appears in the work of Agathias, who died in 582. And later on, Türks were mentioned by Menander in his written work many times between 584 and 602.<sup>188</sup>

The Sogdians, a trading people who spoke an Iranian language, were very prominent in the Türk Empire and Asian trade to the extent that the earliest Türk inscriptions were written in the Sogdian language and writing system. On the Sogdian-language Bugut inscription, which refers to a Türk ruler and dates from around 572 the name of Türks is written as *Türküt* (trkwt).

Another form that can help to reveal the origin, apart from Chinese and Sogdian is Khotan Saka name for the Türks. Several hundred years prior to the emergence of Türks, an Iranian-speaking people, the Saka, settled in a Turkestan oasis town called Khotan. These people took up the Buddhist religion and used a version of Indian script for their own language. The ethnic name *ttruka* appears in Khotanese Saka sources. The Khotanese form must be read with the pronunciation *truk* or *trük*, and this derives from an older form, *truka* or *trükü*. These Khotanese inscriptions are older than Turkic inscriptions.

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<sup>186</sup> BECKWITH 2005: 13-18.

<sup>187</sup> BECKWITH 2006/2007: 6-9.

<sup>188</sup> RÓNA-TAS 1999: 282.

Róna-Tas studied its Tibetan form: “Tibetans established their first 7<sup>th</sup> century and they adopted Buddhism and Indian script reached them via Inner Asia. In many written sources Tibetans called Türks by the name *Dru-gu*. This form preserved the original Khotanese Saka from *Trükü*”.<sup>189</sup>

The Khazars, whose state derived from the Türk Empire, were called Türks by Chinese, Syriac, Byzantine, Georgian, and Arab sources.<sup>190</sup>

According to Tabari, Al-Athir, and Baladhuri, the Arabs attacked the Khazars in 652-653. Having occupied Derbend, they advanced towards Balanjar. The Khazars defending Balanjar were rescued by the Türks. The events are also recorded by the Armenian Sebeos. The sources make it clear that the name *Türk* here designates the western part of the Turkic Qaganate. The *Georgian Chronicle* refers to the Khazars in 626-628 as the ‘West Türks’ who were then opposed to the East Türks of Central Asia. Short after 679, the *Armenian Geography* mentions the Türks together with the Khazars.<sup>191</sup>

Even though the Türk empire collapsed in 744 the ethnic name Türk survived and thus it became widespread among the other Turkic speaking peoples. The name Türk occurs in Uyghur manuscripts too after Türks disappeared from the history scene. Uyghur Manichaen documents make references to *bu qamuy Türk bodun* (this the entire Türk people), *adınçır Türkçe başık* (a special Türk hymn).<sup>192</sup>

It is difficult to determine whether the appearance of the ethnonym Türk in the Turko-Islamic literature of the Karakhanids, which had a strong Türko-Uyghur cultural substratum (the Uyghur script was used as well as Arabic), or the designation of the Mamluk State as Dawlat al-Atrak (the State of the Türks), reflects Muslim usage or the ethnic consciousness of medieval Turkic populations. But as a conclusion, we are sure that after Türk Qaganate the name Türk was used by other Turkic states and their neighbours.

Mahmud al-Kashgari describes the name *Türk* as ‘the age of the maturity’. It is widely accepted that the first scientific description is made by A. Vámbéry. According to him, *Türk* comes from the stem *türe-*, or *törü-* which means ‘to derive’, ‘to born’, and its noun case is ‘created’.

The etymology of Türk remains uncertain. Some scholars like V. Thomsen, v. Le Coq, Németh, Müller, and others, derived it from *türk* ‘strength, power’.<sup>193</sup> Róna-Tas suggested: “Of

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<sup>189</sup> RÓNA-TAS 1999: 279-282.

<sup>190</sup> GOLDEN 1992: 115.

<sup>191</sup> RÓNA-TAS 1999: 282.

<sup>192</sup> GOLDEN 1992: 115

<sup>193</sup> GOLDEN 1992: 117.

the many etymologies of the Türks' name, the most popular to date, and for a while most acceptable was that it derived from a Turkic word meaning 'strong'. But it has turned out that the common word which occurs in Old and Middle Turkic languages and which is written the form *türk*, doesn't mean 'strong' There is a word of this form, but it means 'middle of the time of the ripening of the fruit, the resting time of the day or young people's first period of maturity'. The 'strong' meaning of the word lies only in one component of *erk türk*. The first part of this means 'strong' and in fact the Hungarian word *erő* strength is also derived from this Turkic word. The meaning of the second part is approximately 'flourishing, being in full strength'. The expression only means 'strong, flourishing' with both of the words together."<sup>194</sup>

There is another usage employed in the Orkhon Inscriptions which has both an ethnic and political connotation. In Kül Tegin inscription, reference is made to the *idi oqsız kök türk* "the Kök-Türks who were masterless and without clan organization. In Turkic *kök* donated "sky, sky-colored, blue". In the Türk system of color orientation, 'blue' designated the 'East'. Thus, Kök-Türk meant the 'Eastern Türks'.<sup>195</sup> In sum, scholars still don't have a common opinion on the etymology of the name Türk.

Zimonyi in his recent work analyses the ethnonym *türk* historically and its impacts on the modern state formation from different aspects:

The most frequently used compound in the runic inscriptions of the Türk and Uygur Qaganate is *türk bodun*,<sup>196</sup> the word *bodun* being the gentile form of premodern nationality or ethnic community. The so-called 'Türk bodun' must have regarded themselves as a blood-related community with common customary laws and a common language, and they had their own origin legends, preserved in the Chinese sources.<sup>197</sup>

The two basic versions have common characteristics: an eponymous hero named Türk who descended from a she-wolf. On the other hand, as Muslims, they followed the Islamic tradition, categorizing people according to the Biblical-Quranic system of genealogy, and the idea of the forefather of the people being an eponymous hero was linked to the sons of Noah. For example, writing a chapter in Persian on the Türks, Gardizi (1050–1052) reported that Japheth was the ancestor of Türk and his descendants are Oguz, Karluq, and Khazar. In 1077, Mahmud Al-Kashgari wrote in his *Compendium of the Turkic Languages* that the Türks number, in their origin, twenty tribes, all descended from Türk, son of Japheth, son of Noah.

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<sup>194</sup> RÓNA-TAS 1999: 281.

<sup>195</sup> GOLDEN 1992: 117.

<sup>196</sup> TEKİN 1968: 387–388.

<sup>197</sup> SINOR 1982: 223–257; ZIMONYI 2018b: 83.

The idea of a family tree was transformed for the genealogy of these peoples. Maḥmud Al-Kashgari regarded the fundamental criterion for the Türks to be the Turkic language, which has dialects and several regional differences.<sup>198</sup>

The other characteristics of a blood-related community are reflected in such expressions as *türk bodunuḡ ölüräyin uruḡsıratayın* (KT 010 = BQ 09) ‘I will kill the Türkü people and deprive them of progeny’<sup>199</sup> and *iniyägünüm oḡlanım biriki uḡuşum bodunum* (KT S1 = BQ N1) ‘my younger brothers, my sons, my family, and my people’.<sup>200</sup> The fame and good reputation of an ethnic name are also important elements in “we-consciousness”: *türk bodun atı küsü* (KT 025–26 = BQ 020–22) ‘the good name and reputation of the Türk people’.<sup>201</sup>

The second basic characteristic of gentilism is a common culture including customary law, religious cults, way of life, clothing, et cetera. The *türk törüsü* ‘traditional, customary, unwritten law’,<sup>202</sup> which regulates the social life of the Türk people, is extended to the whole realm. The traditional law of the Türk people (*bodun*) may have prevailed for both the elite and the common people, as the expression *Türk begler bodun* ‘Türk begs [upper class] and people’<sup>203</sup> was identical with *Türk bodun*, showing that the people were socially stratified but even the commoners belonged to the *Türk bodun*, as they had the same laws and customs.<sup>204</sup>

There are references to religious cults amongst the Türks, such as *türk täḡrisi*, *türk iduḡ yeri subı* ‘Türk god, the sacred territory of the Türks’.<sup>205</sup> The term *täḡri* means ‘sky’ but it acquired the religious meaning of God among the nomads. When a nomadic tribal confederation or people founded an empire, its ruler became a qagan, whose power was legitimized by the sky-god.

Language is the third basic element in the construction of gentilism.

The term “Türk” is used in an expanded political sense to encompass the whole empire, which is reflected in the Türk qagan, Türk God, and Türk law. The term “Türk” also turned into a political term denoting the subjects of the Türk khagan. This means that the subjects of the qagan, the supreme ruler of the political community, were Türks in a political sense.

In conclusion, in the second Türk Qaganate, the term “Türk” had two basic connotations: 1) “*Türk bodun*”, a gentile nationality or ethnic community (based on common

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<sup>198</sup> KASHGHARI 1982; ZIMONYI 2018b: 83.

<sup>199</sup> CLAUSON 1972: 220.

<sup>200</sup> CLAUSON 1972: 96.

<sup>201</sup> CLAUSON 1972: 32; ZIMONYI 2018b: 83.

<sup>202</sup> CLAUSON 1972: 531.

<sup>203</sup> CLAUSON 1972: 322.

<sup>204</sup> ZIMONYI 2018b: 84.

<sup>205</sup> CLAUSON 1972: 783.



descent, culture, and language; a stable political frame, such as a tribal confederacy; customs and laws applying to both the elite and commoners); and 2) Türk Qaganate (*Türk el, qagan*), a political community. If an individual belonged to the former, it meant that he or she had an ethnic identity (being a nomad, speaking Turkic, etc.) that was supported by a political identity, namely, as the subject of the Türk *qagan*. Therefore, if someone was a member of the *Khitan bodun*, he or she belonged to the Khitan ethnic community and spoke the Mongolian language, but being the subject of the Türk *qagan*, he or she was a Türk in the political sense.<sup>206</sup>

After the fall of the Türk Qaganate, the concept was employed in Muslim historiography, and by the eleventh century, the eastern European steppe nomads and all Turkic speaking people were regarded as Türks.

It is worth concluding the topic by mentioning the idea of Zimonyi about the impact of the ethnonym *türk* on the modern nation and nation state-building. According to Zimonyi, the new nation-building processes of these republics are closely connected with the idea of the Türk. The term “Türk” denotes a modern nation, which is connected with the birth of Turkey. It seems evident that the modern nations and the nationalities or ethnic communities that existed before modernization are different categories; the latter is used in nation-building processes.<sup>207</sup>

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<sup>206</sup> ZIMONYI 2018b: 84-86.

<sup>207</sup> ZIMONYI 2018b: 79-82, 87.

## CHAPTER I

### GEOGRAPHY, CLIMATE, AND ECONOMY

#### 1. THE GEOGRAPHICAL ZONES

This Eurasian world was divided into three economic systems which sometimes interacted symbiotically and sometimes came into bloody conflict. The two major economic systems represented here were the sedentary-agrarian and pastoral nomadic. Of considerably less importance militarily and politically were the hunting-gathering cultures of the forest zone. These, however, were important economically because of the lucrative fur trade and formed a significant substrate element in the shaping of steppe culture since it was the environment from which many of the steppe peoples sprang.<sup>208</sup>

The belt of deciduous forests covers the 4-500 kilometres-wide area that begins with the Carpathians, stretches down to the Southern Ural, gradually narrows towards Yenisei River, and fades away around the Altai Mountains. Its northern region features vegetation of mixed forests (willow, poplar, oak, maple, lime, ash, and firs), its central region purely deciduous forests, while the southern parts gradually fade into the steppe. Characterized by beech in Europe and poplar in Asia, this belt sustains furry animals, as well as bison and wild boar, and the animals of the southern steppe tend to move north here. The zone has arable areas, and it served as the most valuable agricultural land after the clearance of the forests.

The temperate grasslands stretch from the Carpathians through Ukraine to the Central Volga region and then follow the borderland of Siberia up to Yenisei River. The steppe is grassland with a black subsoil. The now extinct aurochs and the eohippus used to live here. Today's fauna includes various species of antelope, wolf, fox, ground squirrel, hamster, field mouse, and the mole-rat. Large birds of prey are indigenous to all of its regions. This zone is the most suited to nomadic animal husbandry, and it served as the setting for the large migrations.

The arid subtropical and tropical zone stretches to the south of the steppe zone. The mean yearly rainfall is extremely low, and the zone features saltwater lakes, waters without outlets, shifting sands, and stone deserts. Very sparse, the vegetation here includes various species of thistles, needlegrass, and wormwood.

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<sup>208</sup> GOLDEN 1992: 1.

The boundaries of the geobotanical zones are not clear-cut, and they tend to shift with changes of climate. The natural environment of peoples living in these borderlands can undergo substantial change as a result of even the slightest climatic change.<sup>209</sup>

Undoubtedly, the economic system was fragile and depended on the environment. Cold winters with strong winds, heat, and droughts in summer rendered the nomadic steppes practically unsuitable for agriculture. In Mongolia, only a few percent of the territory were suitable for husbandry. Pastoral nomadism is strongly subjected to cataclysms of nature and climate.<sup>210</sup>

## **2. ANIMAL BREEDING**

We shall be dealing with groups that were (and some still are) primarily pastoral nomads. That is, their fundamental economic activity was livestock production which was carried out through the purposeful seasonal movement of livestock and their human masters (living in portable dwellings) over a series of already delineated pasturages in the course of a year.<sup>211</sup>

Pastoral nomadism is a sophisticated and specialized economy that allows humans to survive and prosper by exploiting the resources of arid and semi-arid Eurasian Steppe. Turko-Mongol pastoral nomads' use pastures to sustain flocks--normally consisting of a combination of five grazing animals: sheep, goats, cattle, camels, and horses--whose products supply them with food, clothing, shelter, transportation, and fuel. Nomads migrate with their livestock along fixed seasonal, round-trip routes timed to provide the animals continuously with fresh supplies of grass. The basic political and socioeconomic unit is the camp, which travels together. The size varies depending on the density of pasture and season, but five or six households are typical in Mongolia. The camp often is bound together by blood and marital ties, but unrelated families sometimes join.<sup>212</sup>

### **2.1. Animal types according to Chinese sources**

The modes of life and culture of nomads have not changed during the pre-industrial time. The famous treatise of the Chinese historian Sima Qian Shi-ji describes the composition of the herds' characteristic of the Xiongnu:

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<sup>209</sup> TAAFFE 2008: 32-40.

<sup>210</sup> KRADIN 2015: 15-17.

<sup>211</sup> GOLDEN 1992: 3.

<sup>212</sup> BARFIELD 1993: 136-46; KHAZANOV 1994: 15-138; SKAFF 2012: 33.

“Most of their domestic animals are horses, cows, sheep, and they also have rare animals such as camels, donkeys, mules, hinnies, and other equines known as tao-tu and tian-xi. They move about according to the availability of water and pasture, have no walled towns or fixed residences, nor any agricultural activities, but each of them has a portion of land.”<sup>213</sup>

The basis of the economy of the Türk tribes was nomadic cattle-raising. A Chinese chronicler describes the economy and way of life of the Türks thus: ‘They live in felt tents and wander following the water and the grass.’ Horses were of vital importance to the Türks. Although the economy rested on cattle-raising, winter feed for live-stock was not stored. The advantage of the horse was that it could be at grass all year round, feeding even under a light cover of snow. Sheep and goats followed the horses, eating the grass that they themselves would have been unable to clear of snow. Bulls, yaks, and camels are also frequently mentioned in Türk texts as valuable items of livestock.<sup>214</sup>

## 2.2. Horse

**Horse:** Of all species, the horse had been of major military and economic importance. The nomads had a significant advantage in mobility over their settled neighbours and played a great role in the military and political history of the pre-industrial civilizations.<sup>215</sup>

Humans on the steppes and elsewhere had probably begun to experiment with horseback riding as early as 4000 BC., but it was only around the end of the second millennium BC. that the combination of equestrian skills and mounted archery that became central to the nomads’ way of life first appeared on the grasslands. According to Nicola Di Cosmo:

“Early pastoral nomads, that is, pastoralists moving with their herds according to a fixed seasonal cycle, appear only in the late Bronze and early Iron Age, a phenomenon that brought about a great expansion across Central Eurasia of mounted warlike nomads.”<sup>216</sup>

**Nutritional source:** The horses are slaughtered and the nomads eat horse meat rarely when it was necessary.<sup>217</sup> A special place in the nomadic culture is occupied by mare’s milk-kumis “To satisfy hunger and slake a thirst they drink only mare’s milk. Generally, the milk of one mare is sufficient to satiate three persons.”<sup>218</sup>

**Mobility and transportation:** The mobility was based on the use of horses forming a logistical system that allowed the nomads to travel wherever there was grass.<sup>219</sup> The horse also

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<sup>213</sup> SIMA QIAN Trans. 129; KRADIN 2015: 20.

<sup>214</sup> SINOR, KLYASHTORNY, 1996: 338.

<sup>215</sup> KRADIN 2015: 17-18.

<sup>216</sup> DI COSMO 2002: 31; GRAFF 2016: 153.

<sup>217</sup> GRAFF 2016: 154.

<sup>218</sup> KRADIN 2015: 17-18.

<sup>219</sup> GRAFF 2016: 154.

played an important part in changing pastures during winter. In case pasture was covered in snow, horses were sent first to destroy the compact snow cover with their hoofs in order to reach the grass. For this reason, the horse-sheep ratio in the herd should be not less than 1/6.<sup>220</sup>

**Horse in war:** The importance of the horse as a military power of the nomads is beyond any doubt. Thanks to the usage of the horses in the army made the nomads superior against their sedentary neighbours.<sup>221</sup>

**Horses as trade goods:** For many centuries, horses were used as trade goods on the China-Steppe borderland market. As a whole, the horse has played a major part in the economic, military, and cultural life of nomads.<sup>222</sup>

**Horse in rituals:** In addition to the points mentioned above, it is worth mentioning the place of the horse in the belief system of the Türks. In the nomads, it was customary to bury the horse with its deceased owner. According to their belief, the horse accompanied its owner on the journey to the other world, to the sky (Tengri). Horse skeletons found in some kurgans are proof of this ritual.<sup>223</sup> Some horse bones were found in a kurgan belongs to the Türks in the Hana region, Mongolia. At a depth of 210 cm two entire horses were buried, one with harness. The human skeleton was lying 15 cm deeper in a side vault, parallel to the two horse skeletons (one horse skull was totally missing). The horses were lying with their heads to the west, the human skeleton to the east.<sup>224</sup>

### 2.3. Cattle

The cattle of nomads were not characterized by high productivity. A traditional Mongolian cow could give not more than 400-500 liters of milk a year whereas the Dutch cow provided about 3800 liters of milk a year. However, Mongolian livestock was well adapted to the rigorous climate. A bull could carry a cargo of 200-250 kg for a distance of 15-20 km a day.<sup>225</sup>

### 2.4. Sheep

Sheep have formed the larger part of the nomad's herds in Inner Asia. "For the most part (Tatars) rear sheep and use (their meat) for food." Sheep are modest creatures and they were in no need of special care. They could grass all year-round, drink muddy brackish water and eat snow in winter. Sheep restored their weight much faster after winter hunger and gained

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<sup>220</sup> KRADIN 2015: 17-18.

<sup>221</sup> SINOR 1975: 173.

<sup>222</sup> KRADIN 2015: 17-18.

<sup>223</sup> ÇORUHLU 2012: 1051-1065

<sup>224</sup> ERDÉLYI 2000: 65.

<sup>225</sup> KRADIN 2015: 18.

about 40% in weight in summer. The fertility of sheep reached about 105 lambs per 100 ewes. Sheep were for nomads the major source of milk and meat. With concern to taste and nutritional value, mutton has been considered the best meat. The basic range of clothes was made of sheepskin while felt was manufactured of the sheep's wool. The sheep's weight reached 40-50 kg. The meat yield was about 20-25 kg. In summer, the sheep were sheared and slightly more than 1 kg of wool per animal was obtained.<sup>226</sup>

### **2.5. Goat**

The nomads of Inner Asia had only a few goats (5-10 % of the total headcount of the herd). Goats are even more modest in foraging than sheep and in places where the grass is bad, they actually take the place of the sheep. They orient themselves well in space and lead the way for the whole herd. Goat's milk has the highest fat content but does not find favor among nomads. Breeding of goats was considered less prestigious than keeping a herd of sheep. Mongols' opinion was that only poor persons kept goats.<sup>227</sup>

### **2.6. Camel**

Camels were the last of the most important species of livestock for nomads in Inner Asia. In Inner Asia, camels were mainly used for the transportation of goods. With a loaded pack, a camel was capable to transport up to 300 kg, with a sleigh of about 500-600 kg. The usual norm of the distance covered per day was 25-40 km. Camels were also a source of wool and milk products. One can obtain 3-6 kg of wool from one individual. In southern Mongolia, camels are of the same importance as cattle. Because camel's milk is very fatty, it was used to make a kumis, cheese, and other dairy products.<sup>228</sup>

## **3. DROUGHT AND MASS LOSSES**

Snowstorms, droughts, and epidemics were recurring misfortunes for nomads at all times. The Xiongnu experienced hard times at least every ten years. There is information on plaques among Türks, Uygurs, and Mongols.

In modern history, during hard times Kazakhs lost more than 50% of their livestock. Researchers have sometimes suggested that these major losses of cattle occur in particular cycles. It is possible that this periodicity is related to the twelve-year cycles of solar variability and other natural cycles. If this is the case, one can assume that these mass-losses of livestock occurred every ten to twelve years owing to the cold, snowstorms, droughts, etc. As a rule,

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<sup>226</sup> KRADIN 2015: 18.

<sup>227</sup> KRADIN 2015: 18.

<sup>228</sup> KRADIN 2015: 18-19.

about half of the whole herd perished. It took ten to thirteen years to restore the herds to their original number. On this basis, one can theoretically suppose that the number of livestock cyclically oscillated around a particular level after the occupation of a particular ecological zone. It increased as a result of favorable conditions or reduced due to bad natural factors. Meanwhile, the increase of livestock happened faster than that of the population.

In order to counteract the natural crises, the nomads developed an efficient system of mutual aid. If a nomad suffered the loss of his livestock, fellow tribesmen provided one to two animals as means of subsistence. In return, the recipient was bound to render the same service to his relatives if necessary.

Nomads could also lose livestock as a result of a foray of a foreign tribe. Foraging was one of the favorite pastimes of nomads.

One further important factor of household welfare is the marriage ransom among pastoral nomads. Families with sons had to give substantial parts of their herds as marriage gifts. If the number of sons in the family was very large, marriage could be delayed until the time livestock was increased again to a level that allowed marriage gifts.<sup>229</sup>

#### **4. BATTUE**

When the Türk Qagan Tong Yabgu went hunting north of Kucha, circa 630, he did so with thousands of troopers, all sporting elaborate hairdos, and uniforms of satin, brocade, and fur.<sup>230</sup>

This adaptability is reflected in the striking variations in the hunt found among peoples of very similar ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Among the Tungusic speakers of eastern Siberia and northern Manchuria, for example, some groups followed and hunted wild reindeer as their primary occupation, some combined true pastoral nomadism, and hunting, some agriculture, and hunting, while still, others fished in the summer and trapped fur-bearing animals in the winter; moreover, some Tungus hunted only from horseback and some only on foot. Such variation, fashioned by environmental conditions, historical contingency, and cultural choice, demonstrates the great flexibility built into human hunting.<sup>231</sup>

##### **4.1. Protection the domestic herds**

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<sup>229</sup> KRADIN 2015: 15-17.

<sup>230</sup> ALLSEN 2006: 203.

<sup>231</sup> ALLSEN 2006: 3-4.

Nomads hunted for several reasons, including the protection of their herds from predators, but food acquisition was always a powerful motive. The importance of the game in their diet is widely reported in ancient and medieval literary sources.<sup>232</sup>

#### **4.2. Trade**

Not only did hunting for food continue long after domestication, but the very existence of agricultural societies provided the impetus for the emergence of new types of hunting, one form of which was highly commercialized. This was the specialized hunting for various animal products which were then traded over long distances. More familiar is the northern fur trade, in which hunter-gatherers became linked with large-scale, international trading systems through barter arrangements and tributary relationships. For example, we have a historical record regarding the furs that were sent to the qagan from Western Türks. Together with their trade in military force and in furs—in 642 one of the leaders of the Western Türks sent 38,000 marten pelts to the court.<sup>233</sup> Also, on later dates between the ninth and twelfth centuries, for instance, the indigenous peoples of the Volga-Ural region and Western Siberia supplied high-quality furs—sable, ermine, and black fox—to the Bulgars on the middle Volga, who traded them to merchants who then carried the furs to Middle Eastern markets where they commanded high prices.<sup>234</sup>

#### **4.3. Demonstration of power**

In our case, the royal hunt displays a ruler's ability to marshal and order labor, military manpower, and individuals (both humans and animals) with very special skills. Moreover, by the very nature of the hunt, these abilities were dramatically demonstrated throughout the countryside for the edification of subjects. And a forceful demonstration in one sphere, such as the hunt, strongly implies an equivalent competency in others, such as tax collection or bandit suppression. The royal hunt thus served as an effective reaffirmation of a ruler's capacity to manage large-scale enterprises, that is, to govern.<sup>235</sup>

Royal hunting can also be understood as a form of exploration, a means of familiarizing a ruler with his realm, and of discovering assets, problems, and possibilities.<sup>236</sup>

#### **4.4. Relaxation**

The provision of pleasure and entertainment was an essential duty of royal courts and hunting was a major attraction. And while elite hunting in premodern times may have been

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<sup>232</sup> ALLSEN 2006: 4.

<sup>233</sup> VAISSIÈRE 2005: 210.

<sup>234</sup> ALLSEN 2006: 6.

<sup>235</sup> ALLSEN 2006: 8.

<sup>236</sup> ALLSEN 2006: 189.



much more than simple recreation. Most certainly, hunting was for the elite a passion, and relaxation.<sup>237</sup>

## 5. FARMING AMONGST THE TÜRKES

The nomads inhabited the arid steppes and semi-deserts where agriculture was partially impossible, although some alternatives of ecological and political adaptations of pastoralists in arid areas were possible. Nomadic stockbreeders created diversified, complex forms of the political organization throughout history.<sup>238</sup>

Impoverished nomads who had lost their livestock were settled in winter quarters and in small, permanent settlements (*balıqs*), where they engaged in a primitive form of agriculture. They mainly sowed millet and built small forts (kurgans) in which to store their grain.<sup>239</sup>

We have some historical records in Chinese sources that provide some clues that there was agriculture amongst the Türks. In 689 Mochuo Qagan desired Fengzhou

, Shengzhou, Lingzhou, Xiazhou, Shuozhou, and Daizhou lands where Türks were settled before. Besides these lands, he requested some farming tools and seeds. He got very angry after his request was rejected. At that time the Chinese court was afraid of the military power of Mochuo. At last, drove out all the submitted families of the six prefectures with several thousand tents and gave him more than 40.000 shi of seeds and 3000 farming tools. This was one of the reasons why Mochuo became stronger. This is a unique and most noteworthy source about agriculture amongst the Türks.<sup>240</sup>

### 5.1. Türks and agriculture in China

In any case, we cannot inquire into the problems whether the Türks who surrendered “in the Xianheng era” were engaged in agriculture during their stay in China. However, we can trace the actions of the Türks who surrendered around 630.<sup>241</sup>

Finally, Wen Yanbo’s opinion was adopted by the Emperor, and the surrendered Türks were settled between Youzhou and Lingzhou along the northern border, while their leaders were forced to reside in the capital of Chang-an.

However, after nearly ten years (in 639) the younger brother of Tuli Qagan, named Jie-shi-shuai, rose in revolt and tried to assassinate Emperor Taizong. Although assassination

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<sup>237</sup> ALLSEN 2006: 193-194.

<sup>238</sup> KRADIN 2015: 11.

<sup>239</sup> SINOR, KLYASHTORNY 1996: 338.

<sup>240</sup> HAYASHI 1990: 143.

<sup>241</sup> HAYASHI 1990: 144.

was unsuccessful, the Emperor felt uneasy about their stay on the mainland, and decided to move them beyond the Yellow River.

Had the Türks become farmers during their stay in China proper? We find two distinct answers to this question:

In July of the 13<sup>th</sup> of Zhenguan (639) the Emperor issued an edict and said “When the Tujue surrendered themselves, we selected a fertile land for you, settled new prefectures with you, and relieved you from famine by opening a storehouse... As a result, the bumper crop has persisted, crops have been stored to abundance, the population has been mounting, the number of livestock has grown, you are not short of silk and floss and wear fur coats, and beans and cereals are so abundant that you distribute them to foxes and hare...”

Emperor Taizong said in an imperial letter: “...we settled the south of Yellow River with the surrendered tribes and permitted them to pasture cattle. Now the population and the number of livestock have grown.”

Thus, we must consider the possibility that Tujue were engaged in agriculture before they returned to the north in 639.

We have insufficient evidence to determine which is true, but in any case, we cannot deny the possibility that some of the surrendered Türks were engaged in agriculture, because it is known that Sijie (one of nine Tiele tribes) engaged in agriculture during their stay in China.<sup>242</sup>

## **5.2. Chinese farmers**

Sometimes Chinese people, dominated by the Qagan settled in farming zones, were doing farming to fulfill the need for the nourishment of the Türk Qaganate. In the town of Mayi, there were some Türk garrisons where Chinese people produced grains for the Türks.<sup>243</sup>

## **5.3. Land ownership**

It is a discussion that whether ownership of land or ownership of livestock was the basis of nomadic society. Researchers well aware of the peculiarities of nomad ecology understood that ownership of land is impossible in a mobile way of life. The disparity in land tenure in a mobile society is expressed differently: A rich man possesses a larger quantity of livestock and wanders more quickly (as he has more horses) in order to occupy more convenient pasture plots.<sup>244</sup>

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<sup>242</sup> HAYASHI 1990: 144-146.

<sup>243</sup> HAYASHI 1990: 142.

<sup>244</sup> KRADIN 2015: 13.

## 6. HORSE AND SILK TRADE

### 6.1. Horse trade

There were basically two ways of gathering silks from China by Türks, that of horse-silk exchange and tribute. Horse and silk exchange was a trade tradition before the Türk Qaganate as well. Chinese horse trade with the nomads of the North and the West is well documented from Han times. For the most part of Chinese history, reporting from Sinor, in Yingshih Yü's words. The exchange trade between Chinese silk and barbarian horses was probably the most important type of transaction carried on at both state and personal levels, thus characterizing much of the Sino-barbarian economic intercourse not only in Han China but also in later times.<sup>245</sup>

Horse trade existed since the origin of the Türk Qaganate: in 553 50,000 horses were sent to the Western Wei. It was among the Türks that the Chinese found the horses of which their army needed the 6<sup>th</sup> to the 8<sup>th</sup> century. After the exceptional enrichment of the Türks in the 6<sup>th</sup> century, linked to Chinese weakness, the trade in horses became the normal form of relations between the Chinese and Türks in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries. The Tang created a large cavalry which their Sui predecessors had lacked, and they were supplied by the Türks: from 5,000 at the accession of the dynasty in 618, the number of horses grew to more than 700,000 in the middle of the 7<sup>th</sup> century. Also, in 643 the Tardu sent 50,000 horses along with other animals to the Tang.<sup>246</sup> Beginning in the Chuigong era (685-688), the number of state-owned horses decreased sharply again because of continuous rebellions and barbarian raids.<sup>247</sup>

In the period of Bilge Qagan, trade with china started to rise again. Bilge Qagan came to choose a policy that placed great importance on trade, giving up plunder policy. This policy which placed importance on trade was also expressed in the Bilge inscription: "If you (the Türk people) settle in the land of Ötüken and send caravans you will have no trouble." Mori M. interprets this policy as an expression of "economic nationalism".<sup>248</sup> After an impasse in diplomatic negotiations beginning in 720/721, Bilge Qagan and Xuanzong finally struck an agreement to trade horses for silk.<sup>249</sup> The Emperor Xuanzong honored the envoy with an imperial message, saying, "Since our state entered in friendship with the Tujue, both China and barbarians have enjoyed themselves, both armies have taken a rest, and trade has been opened. Our state has purchased horses from the Tujue and the Tujue have taken or silk and both of

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<sup>245</sup> SINOR, 1972: 175.

<sup>246</sup> VAISSIÈRE 2005: 211.

<sup>247</sup> HAYASHI 1990: 159.

<sup>248</sup> HAYASHI 1990: 151-152.

<sup>249</sup> SKAFF 2012: 44.

them are satisfied richly...’’<sup>250</sup> This policy on the importance of trade was carried over to the successor. But in 2 decades China’s needs for horses changed a bit. A collection of Zhang Jiuling’s works contains several imperial edicts to Dengli (Tengri) Qagan (734-741). Among them are included certain ones which blamed the Qagan for exchanging too many horses. According to them, the number of horses had been agreed upon, so as not to exceed 3-4000 heads a year, but in 734 the Tujue brought 14,000 heads of horses and the amount of bartered silk was estimated at 500,000 pieces. Furthermore, the Tujue brought horses under the false names of other barbarians in order to surpass the regulated amount.<sup>251</sup>

Now the following question comes to mind: Did China really need the horses? According to Ecsedy Ildikó, when the Türks demanded more extensive barter trade, China already had a sufficient number of horses and denied the request. The disappointed Türks then led a campaign against China and forced it to meet their demands. Again, the Türks demanded the expansion of trade, which China denied, and the Türks raided China. Therefore, military actions were needed to create possibilities for trade. Her opinion is premised on the assumption that the Türks wanted as much silk as possible, but that China was a self-supporting empire and did not need livestock from nomads. While nomads wanted to get silk in exchange for the surplus number of their livestock, China had enough cattle and sheep; furthermore, the common horses of the nomadic peoples were needed only in limited numbers. China was led by mere politico-tactical considerations when imperial permissions were granted to legalize barter-trade between the Chinese and foreigners.<sup>252</sup>

Contrary to Ecsedy’s opinion many scholars have noted that China relied upon imported Inner Asian horses from the first millennium BC. until the early twentieth century to meet the needs of the military and public and private transportation.<sup>253</sup> Hayashi claims that China wanted horses, above all, war horses. If a peaceful period was prolonged, horses were not wasted, and as a result, the rate of horse exchanged was lowered. As above mentioned, around the end of the Sui and the beginning of the Tang, the number of state-owned horses decreased considerably, but thereafter good rising produces an increase in the number of horses, and in 664-665 the number of state-owned horses reached 700,000 heads when the rate of one horse was equivalent to only one piece of silk!<sup>254</sup>

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<sup>250</sup> HAYASHI 1990: 158.

<sup>251</sup> HAYASHI 1990: 152.

<sup>252</sup> ECSÉDY 1968: 141, 144-147.

<sup>253</sup> BECKWITH 1991: 185; CREEL 1970: 183-184; SINOR 1972: 174.

<sup>254</sup> HAYASHI 1990: 159.

Skaff and Graff make a good point on the subject. Sedentary states from competing with steppe powers on an equal footing were that they were simply unable to produce enough horses. This was a serious problem for China in particular. The horse had always been a rather marginal animal in China's agrarian economy, and in the interior of the country horses were raised in only a few areas such as Huainan, Fujian, and aboriginal areas in Lingnan and Hunan—but many of the horses from the far south were too small and frail to carry the weight of an armored soldier. This made China's rulers heavily dependent on the extensive grasslands along the empire's northern steppe margin. Demand for imported horses depended on a dynasty's control over horse-producing pasture regions. Dynasties that expanded into the China- Inner Asia borderlands had fewer problems procuring horses because of the greater availability of pasture and personnel with expertise in equine care. As the Tang state extended its control over the rich pastures of Hexi and Longyou, its herds grew accordingly. During the first half of the Tang, the government was successful at exploiting these borderlands to obtain horses. The government raised its own equines on official ranches and purchased additional mounts as needed at market rates from friendly bridle tribes.<sup>255</sup>

As a result, we need to ask other questions to answer the main question “Did China not need horses?” that of “when and under what conditions?”. It was all about whether China had access to pastures that suitable for horse breeding. In addition, during periods of peace and fewer raids, China's need for horses tended to decline, due to there was lesser horse loss. However, except for some short periods, as we saw from the sources, there was a continuous horse-silk exchange, which meant a new trade gateway for the Türks.

## **6.2. Silk trade**

Silk was another important trade commodity for the Türks. The Türks obtained silk from China either with horse-silk exchange or with tributes. But silk was not a very useful fabric for common nomad people. Probably a small fraction of a large amount of silk from China was used by the elites of the Türks. And surplus raw silks were sold to the western markets through the Sogdians. One text shows that the Sogdians within the Türk Empire controlled commerce. Menander's History gives the following passage: “As the power of the Türks increased, the Sogdians, who were earlier subjects of the Hephthalites and now of the Türks, asked their king to send an embassy to the Persians, to request that the Sogdians be allowed to travel there and sell raw silk to the Medes. Ištemi (Sizabul) agreed and dispatched Sogdian envoys, whose leader was Maniakh.”<sup>256</sup>

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<sup>255</sup> SKAFF 2012: 258-259; GRAFF 2016: 161.

<sup>256</sup> VAISSIÈRE 2005: 209.

Under Mukan and for fifteen years thereafter, the Türks took part in the war between the Zhou and the Qi dynasties for control of North China. They conducted a policy of “running with the hare and hunting with the hounds” which greatly enriched them: the Zhou and the Qi each paid the Türks 100,000 pieces of silk per year to assure their neutrality or possibly their services against the rival dynasty. The two dynasties thus emptied their treasuries in order to obtain the good graces and military services of the Türks. The Sogdians of the empire in fact proposed to the Türk princes that they double the profit from the Chinese ransom by utilizing the unused surplus from the phenomenal number of rolls sent by the Chinese. These enormous deliveries of silk, even if it is not necessary to take these overly round numbers at face value, lasted some thirty years, until the Sui put an end to them. The Sogdian commercial and political elites into the Türk hierarchy, taking into account the access to Chinese silk which was granted to them by Türk military strength. The entire western development of the Sogdian networks emerged from this capture of Türk silk and the extraordinary economic windfall.<sup>257</sup>

After the Sogdian merchants had requested the support of the Türk state to help them sell silk in Persia, they failed in their first attempt. Because the Persian king burned the raw silks and the Sogdians returned to their homeland, not at all pleased with what had happened.<sup>258</sup> Then Maniakh offered to sell the raw silks to Byzantine. Then the attempt was succeeded in the following years. Zemarchus, the Byzantine envoy, on his return journey from the Türks, brought significant quantities of silk.<sup>259</sup>

Before concluding the topic, in addition to the horse and silk trade, it is useful to briefly mention the exchange of other goods between China and Türks. There is evidence of a private market for animals from the steppe in Tang Xizhou. A fragmentary register of Xizhou market prices from 742—the best surviving example of a type of document that officially-appointed market directors were supposed to draw up every ten days records numerous goods for sale including local agricultural products, such as wheat flour and raisins, and imports from east and west along the silk routes, such as “Henan” ribbed-weave silk tabby (shi) and Persian camels.<sup>260</sup> Pastoral items for sale include Turkic geldings, “spring white” sheep wool, and kumis (luo) or fermented mare milk, which is usually considered a beverage of pastoral nomads but was consumed in North China during the Tang.<sup>261</sup> These products came from the steppe regions to the north of Xizhou. Several other documents mention merchants heading from the southern

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<sup>257</sup> VAISSIÈRE 2005: 209-210.

<sup>258</sup> VAISSIÈRE 2005: 228.

<sup>259</sup> VAISSIÈRE 2005: 235.

<sup>260</sup> TROMBERT, VAISSIÈRE 2007.

<sup>261</sup> SCHAFFER 1977: 106.

rim of the Jungarian Basin across the Tianshan Mountains to Turfan. Their “merchandise” included sheep, cattle, and camels.<sup>262</sup>

## 7. TAXATION SYSTEM

### 7.1. Three types of tax

There were basically three types of taxes among the nomads during the centuries. But more data about the taxation system of the steppe in the written sources can be gathered from the Mongol Empire times. Allsen’s work takes an important place in the mentioned period of time.<sup>263</sup> Two types of taxes (the amounts remain unknown) are explicitly mentioned in the Old Turkic sources. They are *bert* (later called *qopčur*) ‘the cattle tax’, imposed on the herders, and *irt* (in Mongolian *alban* (*qalan*?) meaning taxes in kind from the conquered territories.

There were taxes for merchants and city dwellers which can be considered as the third tax type. Only implicitly can one assume that the corresponding term was *tamga*.<sup>264</sup>

The Imperial (Turkic, Uygur) budget was balanced by the yearly ‘protective’ payments from the sedentary governments (e.g. China) and by frontier trade.<sup>265</sup>

### 7.2. Tax from nomads

In the early seventh century, the Türk A-shi-na She-er was serving as šad, charged with supervising the non-Türk tribes of Mongolia. Reputedly, “the chiefs revered and loved him” because he declined to tax his subjects and as a result lived a modest lifestyle for a man of such high rank. He explained himself by saying “when the tribes have plenty, I am fulfilled”.<sup>266</sup> This is the first indication that there were regular taxes paid by other nomads to the Türks.

Later on, for example, Zhenzhu Bilge Qagan of the Sir-Yantuo levied 160,000 heads of livestock to send as a betrothal gift to Taizong in 643. An outer client who refused to pay tribute to his qagan was effectively declaring independence and an adversarial relationship. When the Basmil “did not send caravans” of tribute in 704, Kapgan Qagan sent troops to forcibly subjugate them. Squelching a challenge to authority was more important to Kapgan than raiding China, which he did not attack in 704. Ultimately, force and the threat of force were keys to holding together the Türk empires.<sup>267</sup>

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<sup>262</sup> SKAFF 2012: 69.

<sup>263</sup> ALLSEN 1987: 144-189.

<sup>264</sup> PRITSAK 1988: 767.

<sup>265</sup> PRITSAK 1988: 768.

<sup>266</sup> SKAFF 2012: 79.

<sup>267</sup> SKAFF 2012: 244.

As the case of Gaochang alludes, the major responsibility of Türk administrators were overseeing tax collection. Qagan expected their outer clients to send “tribute” and “good news and blessings”.<sup>268</sup> For example, Uygur supervisors in the early ninth century, overseeing the Qay and Khitan, supervised annual dispatches of tribute.<sup>269</sup> Outer tribes paid taxes on livestock and were liable for conscription of men and horses during warfare. Qagans supposedly kept records of these exactions.<sup>270</sup>

Although the rates of taxation on Türk outer tribes are unknown, historical and anthropological evidence demonstrates that it probably was light compared to agricultural societies. For example, the Mongol Empire levy on sheep herds was ten percent, but an exemption was granted to households with fewer than one hundred sheep. Anthropologists have noted rates as low as one to three percent. Levies were irregular, potentially skipping a year or occurring several times annually. Qagans had to limit imposts because their tribes’ mobility and military skill provided leeway to seek new masters.<sup>271</sup> For example, when the Khitan revolted against Tuli Qagan because of his heavy taxes, they submitted to the Tang in 628. Despite the generally light oversight and taxation of the Türk administrative system, perceptions of whether imposts were light or heavy could have a powerful impact on political allegiances.<sup>272</sup>

### **7.3. Taxes from sedentary societies**

Sedentary subjects apparently paid imposts in local products. For example, the king-elteber of Gaochang sent a payment of fruit delicacies and 500 bolts of silk in two carts to Tong Yabgu Qagan in 629.<sup>273</sup>

In addition to plunder, Turkic military forces in the western steppe took other forms of payment when opportunities arose. In some cases, Turkic leaders paid salaries, such as Baga Tarqan of the Türgish who controlled sedentary lands in Sogdia. Also, in Sogdia, at least one local ruler hired Turkic and Sogdian forces with payments of rubies and food supplies.<sup>274</sup>

### **7.4. Taxes from nomads to China**

Although the New Tang History claims that bridle prefectures generally did not forward tribute, taxes, and census records to the Ministry of Revenue, there are indications that “barbarian” communities sometimes were registered and taxed. The Old Tang History contains evidence of registration in the form of census figures of pastoral nomadic tribes in the northern

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<sup>268</sup> TEKİN 1968: 278.

<sup>269</sup> HAYASHI 2002: 96.

<sup>270</sup> KLYASHTORNY 2004: 38.

<sup>271</sup> BARTH 1961: 74; SMITH 1970: 60-70.

<sup>272</sup> SKAFF 2012: 244.

<sup>273</sup> SKAFF 2012: 244.

<sup>274</sup> TROMBERT 2007: 99-101; SKAFF 2012: 251.



tier of the empire. Surviving administrative statutes also stipulate that “barbarian” subjects be taxed. The two earliest articles, dating to 624, indicate that “barbarians” were to receive favorable tax rates assessed in goods that were produced by their local economies. One--dealing specifically with pastoral nomads and mentioning levies in sheep and coins. The other statute mentions that “southwestern barbarian” (*yiliao*) households were to pay their tax in rice at half the regular rate.<sup>275</sup>

The tax doubtlessly was targeted at Turko-Mongols who raised sheep and horses, and perhaps Sogdians and others with access to Middle Eastern silver coins.<sup>276</sup> The Tang’s tax on sheep was in keeping with Turko-Mongol customary practice and extremely light compared to farmers in the empire. Based on a minimum herd size of sixty sheep needed to sustain a poor pastoral nomadic family, a tax of one sheep every three years is an annual rate of 0.55%. This is lower than the above-mentioned Turko-Mongol rates and slightly more than the tax exemption that the Mongols granted to poor nomads. Furthermore, the Tang sheep levy was far lighter than taxes on farming households. The contemporary value of a sheep was approximately 400 bronze coins. This made the annualized tax on a poor nomadic household about 133 coins, far less than the estimated burden of 2,000 coins per annum on Tang farmers.<sup>277</sup> The Tang tax system accommodated the customary norms of Turko-Mongol subjects, presumably to encourage their incorporation into the empire.

## 8. MARRIAGE TIES AS AN ECONOMIC PERSPECTIVE

It is well known before the Türk Qaganate, in Xiongnu and the Han times there were *heqin* marriage treaties. Under these circumstances, Han Gao-zu had no choice but to take the advice of Liu Jing and seek the well-known *heqin* peace alliance with the Xiongnu in 198 BC. The original form of the *heqin* alliance was rather simple. The two parties agreed that: a Han princess would be married to the Chan-yu; several times a year the Han would send gifts of various kinds, including fixed amounts of silk, wine, and food, to the Xiongnu; the Xiongnu was a brother state equal in status to the Han. For their part, the Xiongnu promised not to invade Han lands. In the winter of 198 BC. Liu Jing escorted a daughter from the royal clan under the name of an imperial princess to the Xiongnu and signed the first *heqin* treaty.<sup>278</sup>

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<sup>275</sup> SKAFF 2012: 62.

<sup>276</sup> SKAFF 1998.

<sup>277</sup> TWITCHETT 1970: 234, 131.

<sup>278</sup> YING 1990: 122.

Aside from prestige, nomadic rulers might have financial incentives to marry Tang brides. The material school of Sino-Inner Asian relations, as discussed in the next chapter, argues that Turko-Mongol rulers primarily sought imperial Chinese brides to profit from dowries and betrothal gifts. Below, an examination of known financial information about diplomatic marriages will demonstrate that payments flowed in both directions and tended to fluctuate according to the balance of power.<sup>279</sup>

### **8.1. Dowry**

Quantities of livestock and other goods serving as betrothal gifts are mentioned in several cases. Zhenzhu Bilge Qagan delivered two gifts totaling enormous 53,000 horses, 10,000 cattle and camels, 100,000 sheep, and 38,000 sable pelts. In contrast, when Kapgan Qagan settled an engagement with Empress Wu in 703, he delivered a token betrothal gift of 1,000 horses and other local products. In a final case, when Nuohebo of the Tuyuhun, requested marriage to a Tang princess in 639, the qagan delivered a moderate betrothal gift of 10,000 horses, goats, and cattle. This limited evidence makes it difficult to reach conclusions about typical values of betrothal gifts and the extent to which the amounts were considered payments toward a total bride price. Calculations of power and status appear to have been involved. Zhenzhu Bilge Qagan of the Sir-Yantuo who had limited ability to raid China and insecurities about social status was willing to pay a high price for a prestigious match. The Tuyuhun Qagan, who had a precarious domestic position within a relatively small qaganate, made a betrothal gift of an intermediate amount. Kapgan Qagan, militarily powerful and belonging to the prestigious royal Türk lineage, was confident enough to deliver a small betrothal gift.<sup>280</sup>

## **9. GIFT ECONOMY**

The power of rulers of the Eurasian Steppe empires was largely based on external sources. A mechanism connecting the ‘government’ of the Steppe Empire and pastoral tribes was the institution of a gift economy. Pre-industrial societies’ gift exchange was a universal means of establishing relations between individuals.<sup>281</sup>

The exchange of gifts and distribution of presents are well reflected in different narrative monuments. The Chinese chronicles of the Tang Dynasty mentioned that Turkic and Uyghur qagans distributed the gifts of Chinese emperors to tribal chiefs and military trophies to their armies. Rashid Al-Din described young Chinggis Khan as a typical re-distributor. “This

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<sup>279</sup> SKAFF 2012: 222.

<sup>280</sup> SKAFF 2012: 223.

<sup>281</sup> KRADIN 2015: 26.

prince Temujin takes off his clothes and gives it up, dismounting from his horse he gives it up. He is that man, who could take care of the region, care for the army and well maintain the ulus”.<sup>282</sup>

Through manipulating with the means of gifts and giving them to the companions- in – arms and chiefs of tribes, qagans could increase their political influence and prestige as generous ruler and, at the same time, they could be persons by the commitment of sending gifts in return. In receiving gifts, tribal chiefs could satisfy their personal interests and at the same time, they could raise their intra-tribal status by way of distributing gifts among the fellow-tribesmen or through the arrangement of ceremonial festivals. When an individual received a gift from the steppe empire’s ruler, it was as if he acquired a portion of the ruler’s supernatural fortune, through which he additionally contributed to the rise of his own prestige.<sup>283</sup>

## 10. BLACKSMITH AND IRON FORGING

Türks – the people of Bumin – were originally a group of metallurgists engaged in the mining or processing of iron, or possibly both. The above-mentioned ‘caverns’ of the Türks were, in fact, underground mines where they labored for the principal benefit of the Ruanruan.<sup>284</sup> It is well known that before creating their own empire in the middle of the sixth century AD, the Türks were the blacksmith slaves of the Ruanruan.<sup>285</sup> Zhou-shu states this as: “(Türks) began living south slope of the Chin-shan (Altai mountains) and they worked as blacksmiths of Ruanruan.”<sup>286</sup> They also took pains to put on a show for a Byzantine embassy traveling through Sogdia, offering them iron for sale. Menander thought that their real purpose was to demonstrate that they had iron mines.<sup>287</sup> In this respect, we can claim that Türks had a mastership in ironworking.

## 11. EXTERNAL DEPENDENCY THEORY

The adherents of the theory of “external dependence” think that nomadism depends on the environment and the neighbouring agricultural-urban societies. This opinion goes back to the works of Owen Lattimore.<sup>288</sup> The theory focuses mainly on political external dependency

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<sup>282</sup> KRADIN 2015: 26.

<sup>283</sup> KRADIN 2015: 29.

<sup>284</sup> SINOR, KLYASHTORNY 1996: 331.

<sup>285</sup> SINOR 1981: 143.

<sup>286</sup> ZHOU-SHU (50,1A-3A) MAU-TSAI 14.

<sup>287</sup> GOLDEN 2011: 111.

<sup>288</sup> LATTIMORE 1940.

indeed. But under this section, we will discuss the economical external dependency basically on the Türk Qaganate case.

One of the first adherents of economical dependency theory Ildikó Ecsedy claims that that the nomadic economy cannot produce enough to sustain the nomads, and they can keep themselves in existence with the help of marauding campaigns only. Furthermore, focusing on the point of horse-silk trade between Türks and China, her opinion is premised on the assumption that the Türks wanted as much silk as possible, but that China was a self-supporting empire and did not need livestock from nomads. While nomads wanted to get silk in exchange for the surplus number of their livestock, China had enough cattle and sheep; furthermore, the common horses of the nomadic peoples were needed only in limited numbers. China was led by mere politico-tactical considerations when imperial permissions were granted to legalize barter-trade between the Chinese and foreigners.<sup>289</sup>

Traditional historians of settled societies, including China, typically attributed pastoral nomadic attacks to tribesmen's bestial nature and greed for profit.<sup>290</sup> Jagchid argues that the pastoral nomadic subsistence economy depended on grain and cloth from China that could not be produced on the steppe. Raiding resulted when Chinese regimes denied nomadic peoples peaceful trade to obtain agricultural goods.<sup>291</sup> Another historian suggests that Turko-Mongol state formation depended on outside sources of goods.<sup>292</sup> Joseph Fletcher believed that Turko-Mongol leaders required plunder gained from constant campaigns to retain the loyalty of tribesmen.<sup>293</sup>

In his various works, Barfield strongly emphasizes the dependency of the nomads on the Chinese economy. Furthermore, he goes further and calls the nomad empires as "shadow empires".<sup>294</sup> Based on the aforementioned notion that the nomadic world, especially that which was in close proximity to agricultural settlements, was not self-sufficient and had developed over time a dependency upon the importation of agricultural products and other goods, the theory of dependency maintains that the aggressive behavior of nomads and the periodic violence unleashed on peaceful agriculturalists were generated by economic need. The greater the riches to be reaped by various forms of extortion (plunder, tribute, and the imposition of trade), the more the nomads were able to develop larger military machines and "shadow

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<sup>289</sup> ECSEDY 1968: 140-141.

<sup>290</sup> SINOR 1978.

<sup>291</sup> JAGCHID, SYMONS 1989: 1-25, 165.

<sup>292</sup> BURNHAM 1979: 357-358.

<sup>293</sup> FLETCHER 1979-80: 236-242.

<sup>294</sup> BARFIELD 1981, 1996, 2001.

empires” that lived a parasitic existence on the back of the wealth extracted from their sedentary neighbours.<sup>295</sup>

Khazanov’s theory also focused on the existence of an economic differential between a sedentary and a nomadic economy, assuming especially that the nomadic economy was not self-sufficient, and therefore that its permanent deficit drove nomads to seek the products they lacked from neighbouring sedentary states.<sup>296</sup>

One of the recent followers of this idea, Kradin claims: ‘Pastoral nomadism could not provide stable surplus of food resources to support large groups of people who did not participate in the food production - ruling aristocracy, officialdom, soldiers, priests, etc.’<sup>297</sup> ‘The nomads needed agricultural and handicraft products. These products were in the south, behind the Great Wall. Toward this end, they used the charisma of external prestigious goods and monopolized them.’<sup>298</sup> He concluded: ‘The power of the rulers of the Eurasian Steppe empires was largely based on external sources.’<sup>299</sup>

Drompp criticizes Barfield’s theory as followed: ‘Barfield suggests that the Türk qagans kept their positions only by obtaining wealth from China; his argument is that “The foreign policies of all imperial confederacies of Mongolia had a single aim: to extract direct benefits from China directly by raiding or indirectly through subsidies, and the establishment of institutionalized border trade agreements that met subsistence needs”.<sup>300</sup> If this was the Türks’ “single aim”, what, then, was the purpose of expanding their realm to the borders of Persia? Why should the Türks have gone to the trouble of subduing the distant Hephthalites, for example, if their only goal was the exploitation of Chinese wealth? The historical evidence shows that the Türks were in fact keenly interested in trade with powers other than China, such as the Byzantines and Persians. This provides us with an understanding of the Türks’ purpose – or at least part of it – in defeating the Hephthalites: to gain access to and protect trade routes to the West. Barfield’s model of a single-axis foreign policy focused entirely on China thus does not work for the first Türk Empire.’<sup>301</sup>

According to Di Cosmo’s idea: ‘Contrary to these assumptions, archaeological records show a much less clear separation between opposite and mutually exclusive systems, especially in consideration of the incontrovertible evidence of settlements and limited agriculture in the

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<sup>295</sup> BARFIELD 1996; DI COSMO 2015: 58.

<sup>296</sup> KHAZANOV 1984: 69-84.

<sup>297</sup> KRADIN 2015: 16.

<sup>298</sup> KRADIN 2015: 25.

<sup>299</sup> KRADIN 2015: 26.

<sup>300</sup> BARFIELD 2001: 15.

<sup>301</sup> DROMPP 2005: 104.

steppe, presumably to a greater or lesser extent enabled by climatic variations and local conditions, such as river valleys and steppe oases. Moreover, close scrutiny of the historical evidence shows that nomadic encroachment upon sedentary lands, including plunders and raids, occurs under conditions that are not related to economic need.’<sup>302</sup> And he adds: ‘The fundamental fallacy of this theory is that there is no evidence to support its basic premise, namely, that pastoral economies were not self-sufficient at the subsistence level and required imports to fulfill basic economic needs.’<sup>303</sup>

Agreeing with Drompp and Di Cosmo, the Chinese sources stated that Türks didn’t need the economical and food sources from China. Most of the goods brought from China by plunders, tributes, and gifts are mainly luxury goods such as silk and art crafts. On the other hand, according to the archaeological findings, Western Türk Qaganate was in close relationship with Persian, Sogdian, and Byzantine worlds, and the data can clearly show that Western Türks were also more into luxury goods from the western sedentary world, but not basic economical sources.<sup>304</sup> If we consider all we can conclude that Türk Qaganate’s economical structure was not dependent on the sedentary societies. However, I would like to make a final point on the subject. The regional economy was very important at that time, just like it is today. China, with a strong economy, and high production potential held an important place for the horse and silk trade of the Türks. In this way, the Türks traded the products that they obtained from China to the western neighbours Iran and Byzantium. In other words, China with political stability and power of production affected the Türk Qaganate positively.

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<sup>302</sup> DI COSMO 2015: 51.

<sup>303</sup> DI COSMO 2015: 58.

<sup>304</sup> STARK 2015: 463-502.

## CHAPTER II

### MILITARY ORGANISATION AND THE WARFARE OF THE TÜRK QAGANATE

The Türk Qaganate (552-744), in widening its power and territory throughout the Asian steppes, became tough components of the great sedentary civilizations. Its power was based on military strength, creating a vast empire from China to Byzantium. In the foreign and Turkic indigenous sources, there are no detailed descriptions about their military organization and warfare. Yet still, some clues can be found in the various written and visual sources.

During the Early Middle Ages, the Türks, a nomadic people of Central Asia, united all the Eurasian Steppe tribes in a great empire. The Türk Qaganate, stretching from Manchuria in the East to the Crimea in the West, became a rival to the Chinese Tang, the Persian Sassanid, and the Byzantine empires in the second half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century AD. The Türk Qaganate dominated almost the whole of the Eurasian Steppe zone from the 6<sup>th</sup> to the middle of the 8<sup>th</sup> century AD. Only the Chingissid Empire could build a more spacious nomadic empire including China and the eastern part of the Middle East. The most important factor of building an empire is successful conquests in general and this is true for nomads.<sup>305</sup>

As for the Türks, their genuine sources, the Türk runic inscriptions from the first half of the 8<sup>th</sup> century, emphasized the importance of creating a new army to be successful in building a new empire. According to the famous and often quoted phrases of the Kül Tegin Inscription (AD 732), a new state/empire (*el*) is based on military power: “My father, the Qagan, went off with seventeen men. Having heard the news that (Elterish) was marching off, those who were in the towns went up to the mountains and those who were on the mountains came down (from there), thus they gathered and numbered to seventy men. Because Tengri granted strength, the soldiers of my father, the Qagan, were like wolves, and his enemies were like sheep. Having gone on campaigns forward and backward, they gathered together and he collected men; they all numbered seven hundred men. After they had numbered seven hundred men, (my father, the Qagan,) organized and ordered the people who had lost their state and their Qagan” (KT E-12, 13).<sup>306</sup>

To study the military system of the Türk Qaganate in the indigenous and foreign sources, the pictorial material and archaeological findings must be taken into consideration. The oldest written sources that give us some descriptions about the military features of the Türks

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<sup>305</sup> Drompp formulated it as follows: “Nomads established and maintained their empires through the use and threat of violence.” (DROMPP 2015: 437-453.)

<sup>306</sup> TEKİN 1968: 265.

are the Chinese sources, such as Zhou-shu, Sui-shu, and Tang-shu, respectively.<sup>307</sup> According to Liu Mau-Tsai's chart, the Türks fought against the Chinese 410 times between AD 542-764,<sup>308</sup> although some of these operations might have been smaller raids. The Chinese annals mentioned the Türks very often because of these frequent relations. On the other hand, the Greek source Strategikon – attributed to Emperor Maurice (AD 582-602), and written in the late 6<sup>th</sup> century AD – is another important early source that basically codified the military reforms of the Byzantine army.<sup>309</sup> The work of Ġāhiz, 'Exploits of the Türks', described the military merits of the nomadic Türks in the second half of the 9<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>310</sup> The most important indigenous sources are the Türk runic inscriptions (early 8<sup>th</sup> century) including many campaigns against the other nomadic peoples and wars against the Chinese. On the basis of the runic sources, there are several relevant pieces of data concerning their warfare.<sup>311</sup> Besides the written sources, archaeological and pictorial sources can shed light on the warfare of the Türks. Chinese mortuary beds, Sogdian wall paintings, and petroglyphs from the Altai Mountains take the lead for visual sources.<sup>312</sup>

## 1. THE ARMY'S STRUCTURE AND PROPORTIONS

While the army was basically called *sü*,<sup>313</sup> Sinor phrases that there was not a specific word for a warrior in Turkic.<sup>314</sup> The Turkic language designated a 'warrior' with the term *er* 'human male, man' and hence 'fighting man, husband,' etc.<sup>315</sup> The Turkic inscriptions of the Orkhon and Yenisei make note of the *er at* 'warrior-name', i.e. a youth who has acquired maturity and completed a rite of initiation involving hunting or military activity. Such customs were not unknown to later Turkic societies. The Mongol term, *čerig* 'warrior, soldier, army, military,' derives from the Turkic *čerig* 'troops drawn up in battle order' and then 'army, troops'. Other terms were used to express the concept of a soldier such as *alp* 'brave' (also 'tough, resistant, hard to overcome') *alpayut*, 'warrior' and *tonga* 'hero, outstanding warrior.'<sup>316</sup> The army consisted of two types of warriors: horseman (*atly*) including light archers and heavy

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<sup>307</sup> MAU-TSAI 1958; CHAVANNES 1903.

<sup>308</sup> MAU-TSAI 1958: 433-439.

<sup>309</sup> LUTTWAK 2009.

<sup>310</sup> WALKER 1915: 631-697.

<sup>311</sup> ORKUN 1936; TEKİN 1968.

<sup>312</sup> YATSENKO [http://www.transoxiana.org/14/yatsenko\\_turk\\_costume\\_chinese\\_art.html](http://www.transoxiana.org/14/yatsenko_turk_costume_chinese_art.html) (04.04.2017).; LERNER 2005: 168.

<sup>313</sup> CLAUSON 1972: 781.

<sup>314</sup> SINOR 1981: 135.

<sup>315</sup> GOLDEN 2011: 90.

<sup>316</sup> CLAUSON 1972: 127, 128, 515; GOLDEN 2011: 91.



lancers, and heavy armored infantry (*kedimliḡ yadaḡ*).<sup>317</sup> In the army system of the Türks, there was a group that we can call the ‘guard force’. We have some evidence for the existence of such an elite force, perhaps a royal *comitatus*, like the *böri* of the Türks as the Chinese sources recorded: “They named their guardsmen as Fu-li (*böri*) which means ‘wolf’. They come from the lineage of a she-wolf and they never want to forget their origin.”<sup>318</sup>

The peoples of a nomadic empire were organized according to the decimal system, which was well known among them from the time of the Xiongnu era. The *tümen* represented 10,000 men in the army.<sup>319</sup> The word *tümen* appears in the Türk inscriptions nine times.<sup>320</sup> It is quoted for the first time in the Türk inscriptions as the follows: “They brought a man (from the enemy). His words (were) as follows: ‘An army of on *tümen* (100.000) men has assembled on the Yarıš plain’ he said” (T II, W-1).<sup>321</sup> In addition, the word *tümen* is recorded in the Kül Tegin Inscription: “The Chinese governor Ong Tutuq came with an army of fifty thousand (*beš tümen*) and we fought (KT E-31).”<sup>322</sup> The word on the Türk inscriptions refers to the number of the enemy’s soldiers, most of the Chinese. Yet for their own army, they only use numeral amounts, which are less than a *tümen* (10,000). However, the existence of the word *tümen* in their language proves that, according to their sense, armies (either enemies or their own armies) are organized according to the decimal system.

When the troops were drawn up in battle order, the ratio was two-thirds horsemen to one-third infantry.<sup>323</sup> The Tonyuquq Inscription recorded this as follows: “Two-thirds of them were mounted, a (third) party was on foot.”<sup>324</sup> This is corroborated by the Chinese data: between AD 563-564, Northern Zhou attacked Northern Qi with the help of the Türks and the number of the Türk warriors was 100,000 footmen and 200,000 riders.<sup>325</sup> Even though the given numbers are exaggerated here, the ratio (2/3) is similar.

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<sup>317</sup> CLAUSON 1972: 55, 704.

<sup>318</sup> Zhou-shu (50, 1a-3a), Zhou-shu (50, 1a-3a), MAU-TSAI 1958: 9.

<sup>319</sup> The word *tümen* originally meant ‘ten thousand’, but was often used for an indefinitely large number (CLAUSON 1972: 507).

<sup>320</sup> T Ins. II, W-1; KT E-31, N-12; BQ E-25, E-26, S-1, S-8, S-8, N-12.

<sup>321</sup> T Ins. II, W-1; TEKİN 1968: 288.

<sup>322</sup> KT Ins. E-31; TEKİN 1968: 268.

<sup>323</sup> PRITSAK 1988: 769; It is widely known that nomad armies consisted mostly of cavalry. Yet as it can be understood from the inscription, Kül Tegin sometimes fought against his enemies on foot. Thus, we can deduce that some parts of the Türk army consisted of foot soldiers. See: BALOGH 2004: 45-52.

<sup>324</sup> *Eki üligi athğ erti bir üligi yadağ erti* (Tonyuquq ins. I, W-4); TEKİN 1968: 283.

<sup>325</sup> MAU-TSAI 1958: 449.

## 2. THE NUMBER OF THE WARRIORS IN THE ARMY

It is difficult to estimate the exact number of soldiers in the Türk army because it varied according to the importance of the war or the expedition. As mentioned above, the Second Türk Qaganate built their first army with 700 men, as is stated in the Kül Tegin Inscription.<sup>326</sup> These figures are obviously mythological, but it seems that an army of 700 men already represented a significant force to found an empire (*el*). Based on the Tonyuquq Inscription, the Türks fought against the Oguz with 2000 warriors: “The army (of the Oguz) reportedly consisted of three thousand men; we were two thousand. We fought. Heaven favored us. We put them to rout. They were poured into the river. Those who were put to rout were also killed on the way while they were trying to escape.”<sup>327</sup> According to the Chinese sources, Elterish attacked the Nine Tribes with 5000 men and took the title of *Qagan* after his victory. Liu Mau-Tsai collected the figures for the size of the army given in the Chinese sources and summarised the data in tabular form.<sup>328</sup> In the Chinese source, the greatest Türk army consisted of 400,000 archers, who attacked the Chinese under the rule of Išbara Qagan in 582.<sup>329</sup> This number might have been exaggerated by the Chinese in order to show their enemy was too powerful.

## 3. THE CHAIN OF COMMAND

The Chinese sources describe the structure of the command of the Türks in the following way: “There were altogether 5 commanders in Tujue army. The brothers always fought to have control over the army.”<sup>330</sup> The Qagan was the commander in chief. Under his rule, there were four lower Qagans who were his brothers or sons, and they were called *Šad* and *Yabgu*. There were right and left *Šads* and right and left *Yabgus*. Furthermore, they all had their own army, and each of them was controlling only their own territories. For example, during the realm of Mochuo Qagan, his son commanded 40,000 men and each of the two *Šads* commanded 20,000 men. In addition to *Šad* and *Yabgu*, there was another title, *A-po-ta-kan* (Apa Tarqan), which is supposed to be the minister of war.<sup>331</sup>

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<sup>326</sup> KT E-13; TEKİN 1968: 265.

<sup>327</sup> T Ins. I, S-9; TEKİN 1968: 285.

<sup>328</sup> ZIMONYI 2016: 110.

<sup>329</sup> MAU-TSAI 1958: 433.

<sup>330</sup> Sui-shu (84, 1a-6b), MAU-TSAI 1958: 46-47.

<sup>331</sup> MAU-TSAI 1958: 429-430.

#### 4. BATTUE AND MILITARY TRAINING

The organized hunt (battue) in the steppes and mountains was of the military as well as economic significance. It was during such hunts that warriors were trained and the various detachments were coordinated.<sup>332</sup> In addition, seasonal hunting or battles had a significant contribution to nomads' economy in the way of meat source for nutrition and fur source for clothing and trade.

The highest level of military participation in the chase, however, is found in Inner Asia, where the rulers' hunters and soldiers are virtually identified in the epic tradition. That Türk Qagans actually did so is affirmed by the Chinese pilgrim Xuanzong, who saw Tong Yabgu hunting with 200 officers and countless numbers of troops.

But the chase did more than fashion solidarity among the officer corps; equally critical was the forging of strong bonds between commanders and troops. This testing of loyalty on the hunt had important carryover effects since it provided a shared experience and, in many cases, underscored a shared passion and shared danger. This provides reasons to trust and to feel strong attachments to others, the creation of a sense of brotherhood.

Kazakh scholar Aleksandr Kadyrbaev argues that the triune military structure of the nomads, that is, the division into right, left, and center, emerges directly from the organization of the group or battue hunt among the steppe peoples. For him, the collective hunt, in combination with nomadism, stimulated the creation of the traditional military organization, training, tactics, and command structure of the Turkic and Mongolian peoples. And it also explains why the conduct of the war by the nomads was always characterized by extensive maneuver and the need for operating space. The forms and methods of nomadic military operations, he concludes, were first worked out and tested in the battue hunt and then applied on the battlefield.

There is in fact abundant and unequivocal evidence, some already noted, that the hunt was considered by contemporaries, including royal hunters, as a military operation, a rehearsal for war, and more specifically, as the only practicable method for instilling and maintaining unit cohesion and coordination. This, more than anything else, explains why the hunt became so thoroughly militarized in the core area and across the steppe.<sup>333</sup>

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<sup>332</sup> SINOR, KLYASHTORNY 1996: 338.

<sup>333</sup> ALLSEN 2006: 214-218.

The success of a great ring hunt, like success in a military confrontation, depended on discipline, an effective chain of command, and the ability to deploy and control armed formations.<sup>334</sup>

Of equal importance, war and the hunt are bracketed together, implying that they were inextricably linked. Soldiers required physical fitness and it was widely believed that hunting was an excellent form of exercise. Understandably, hunting was held to be good preparation for war because it taught courage.

In addition to these benefits, the hunt taught basic military skills. The crucial skills developed were, of course, riding and shooting. Hunting on horseback was the best way to improve equestrian techniques, at least those used in war.

But while European rulers, generals, and writers on chivalry, politics, and military affairs all recognize the chase as a preparation for war and as a way to keep fit and test one's nerve and skill with weapons, these were still basically recommendations that individual soldiers should hunt during the "off-season" to stay in shape. This differs from the practice of the core area and the steppe, where the importance of hunting to warfare was by no means restricted to the acquisition of individual skills or fitness. Here the royal hunt was a form of unit training, a method of fostering unit solidarity, a means of developing skills in command, control, and logistics. Hunts for them were large-scale military maneuvers, an imitation of war.<sup>335</sup>

## 5. THE BATTLE ORDER AND TACTICS OF THE TÜRKES

The Türkes had their distinctive battle organizations and tactics. The above-mentioned Byzantine source *Strategikon* mentions the military organization and warfare skills of the Türkes and Avars as follows: "...only the [nations] of the Türkes and Avars concern themselves with military organization, and this makes them stronger than other Scythian nations when it comes to pitched battles."<sup>336</sup> The [nation] of the Türkes is very numerous and independent. They are not versatile skilled in most human endeavors, nor have they trained themselves for anything else except to conduct themselves bravely against their enemies."<sup>337</sup>

**Shock Combat:** The most widely used tactic of the nomads was shock combat. The Chinese Emperor Hou-mo-chen mentions the Türkes' tactic as follows: "The barbarians' power

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<sup>334</sup> ALLSEN 2006: 215.

<sup>335</sup> ALLSEN 2006: 209-213.

<sup>336</sup> 'Scythian' is a general term employed by Byzantine writers to designate the nomadic tribes north of Black Sea and through the central Asiatic steppes.

<sup>337</sup> DENNIS 1984: 23.

lies behind their attacking us as fast as an arrow and backing away like a tearing muscle fiber. Even if we run after them it is hard to catch them.”<sup>338</sup>

**Night Raids:** One of the most effective tactics used by the nomads was night raids. They could catch the enemy unaware while they were defenseless at night and rapidly make the enemy ineffective. According to the Türk inscriptions, the Türks defeated some of their enemies with night raids. It is written on the Kül Tegin Inscription that, after crossing the river Irtyš, they launched a night attack against the Türgish people and defeated them.<sup>339</sup> It is also stated on the Tonyuquq Inscription how they defeated the Kirgiz people through a night attack.<sup>340</sup>

**Divided Units:** The Strategikon has a lengthy section on this tactic. It begins by noting that: “Unlike the Byzantines and Persians who form three units, the Türks and Avars are divided into different groupings, compactly joining the divisions together in order to appear as one battle line. They also hold a force outside of the battle line, which they use for ambushes and to help those who are in difficulty.”<sup>341</sup>

The same source mentions their cavalry battle formation as follows: “...just as the Avars and Türks line up today keeping themselves in that formation, and so they can be quickly called to support any unit that may give way in battle. For they do not draw themselves up in one battle line only, as do the Romans and Persians, staking the fate of tens of thousands of horsemen on a single throw. But they form two, sometimes even three lines, distributing the units in depth, especially when their troops are numerous, and they can easily undertake any sort of action...”<sup>342</sup>

**Feigned Retreat:** This is also known as ‘Alan drill’. In this tactic, the feigned retreat and counter-attack were practiced. The nomads shooting arrows in the retreat were as effective as when attacking. The feigned retreat, associated with the nomads for a millennium, nonetheless continued to fool their enemies. In the 629/630 Türk-Khazar campaign in Transcaucasia, the Khazars met the Sassanid troops and “immediately took flight, but only to appear later on both flanks to challenge” the Persians. They then surrounded and destroyed the Persian army.<sup>343</sup> It can be estimated that the Eastern Türks also applied this tactic many times

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<sup>338</sup> SS 56, (3bf), Biography of Yü-wen Pi, MAU-TSAI 1958: 122.

<sup>339</sup> ‘... and crossing over the Irtysh river. We fell upon the Türgiś people, while they were asleep.’ (E-37); TEKİN 1968: 269.

<sup>340</sup> ‘We arrived at the river Ani. We rode down along that river. In order to be fed we ordered (the soldiers) to dismount. We used to tie the horses to trees. We went on riding at gallop by day and by night. We fell upon the Kirgiz while they were asleep. We awakened them with the lances. Meanwhile their Qagan and army gathered together. We fought and defeated them. We killed their Qagan.’ (N-3,4); TEKİN 1968: 286, 287.

<sup>341</sup> GOLDEN 2011: 94.

<sup>342</sup> DENNIS 1984: 116.

<sup>343</sup> GOLDEN 2011: 95.

as it was a typical nomadic war strategy. Later on, the nomads defeated their enemies with this deceptive tactic for many centuries.

**The Defence of the Military Camp:** As mentioned above, the Türks had a special guard force, which was called *böri* (Fu-li). It was mainly responsible for protecting the Qagan and his family. Besides this, there was a force that served as camp guards. They defended the camps against the rapid raids of the enemies. Related to this, it is written in the Tonyuquq Inscription that: “From the Qagan (someone) came back: ‘Stay there!’ he said, ‘Place the vanguard and patrols properly, and do not let the enemy to make a surprise attack on you!’ So was the message Böğü Qagan sent me (N-10).”<sup>344</sup>

## 6. THE WEAPONS OF THE TÜRKİS IN THE NON-INDIGENOUS SOURCES

The following passage can be quoted from Bei Shi in order to understand the combatant character of the Türks: “(The Türks) valued death in battle and were embarrassed to die by diseases.”<sup>345</sup> The military might and fighting skills of the Türks were remarkable due to their considerable victories over numerous foes; they also constrained other peoples and tribes to adopt an addition to their decimal army system. Of course, these combatant features triggered the Türks to produce various weapons among themselves.

As for the basic and the most important weapons of the Türks, the Chinese sources give the first significant descriptions. The Chinese source Zhou-shu says: “Their weapons are bow and arrow, mace, armored vest, long cavalry spears, and sabers; they also carry daggers as a belt adornment.”<sup>346</sup> The travel book of the Chinese pilgrim Xuanzang (AD 630) adds new data about the weapons of the Türks. Xuan-zang encountered the Qagan of the Türks, Ye-hu, in a hunting expedition: “The horses of these barbarous people are very fine. The Qagan himself was covered with a robe of green satin and his hair was loose, only it was bound round with silken band some ten feet in length, which was twisted round his head and fell down behind. He was surrounded by about 200 officers who were all clothed in brocade stuff, with their braided hair. On the right and left he was attended by independent troops all clothed in furs and fine-spun hair garments. They carried lances and bows and were mounted on camels and horses. The eye could not estimate their numbers.”<sup>347</sup>

<sup>344</sup> T Ins. I N-10; TEKİN 1968: 287-288.

<sup>345</sup> PS 99, 2b, MAU-TSAI 1958: 501.

<sup>346</sup> MAU-TSAI 1958: 9.

<sup>347</sup> WATTERS 1903: 74; LIGETI 1986a: 83.

The western source, the Strategikon, gives further descriptions about similar weapons, adding information about how nomads used them actively on the battlefield: “(They) wear armor and have sabers, bows, and lances, most of them in battle make use of two sets of arms. They mount up the lances on their shoulders and hold the bows in their hands, using both as need requires. Not only do they wear armor, but the horses of their notable ones are also covered with iron and felt in the front areas. They train diligently, especially for mounted archery.”<sup>348</sup>

The Arab ethnic stereotyping (Al-Ğāhiz) speaks highly of the Türks’ weapons manufacturing as follows: “And so, with saddles and the different stages of arrow-making and quivers and lances and all weapons, offensive or defensive. The Türk does these all himself from the beginning of the process to the end without needing any assistance or looking for help to the advice of any friend.”<sup>349</sup>

## 7. WEAPONS IN THE INDIGENOUS SOURCE

After some descriptions from foreign sources, now we should take a look at one of the most important and unique indigenous sources of the Türks: the Kül Tegin Inscription. What kind of clues does this runic inscription give us?

While fighting in the war of Ming-sha Mountain (AD 706), the Chinese army shot their arrows at Kül Tegin. His armor and *kaftan* were hit by many arrows but he escaped without injury.<sup>350</sup>

When Kül Tegin was 26 years old, he fought against the Kirgiz and used a bow and spear: “Kül Tegin mounted (the white stallion) Bayirku and attacked; he hit one man with an arrow (oqun urti) and stabbed (sančdi) two men (E-34-36).”<sup>351</sup>

Kül Tegin was 30 years old when the Qarluq revolt burst out and he used his lance once again: “He mounted (the white horse) Alp Šalči and attacked suddenly. He stabbed two men. (N-2).”<sup>352</sup>

After the Toquz Oguz had rebelled, the Türks went on a campaign against them and Kül Tegin used a lance and saber: “He stabbed six men with a lance. In hand-to-hand fighting, he cut down the seventh man with a saber (qiličladı) (N-5-7).”<sup>353</sup>

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<sup>348</sup> GOLDEN 2011: 110.

<sup>349</sup> WALKER 1915: 685, 686.

<sup>350</sup> “They hit (him) with more than one hundred arrows (*oq*) on his armor (*yariq*) and caftan (*yalma*); (but he did not let the enemy hit him) even once on his face or head.” (E-34); TEKİN 1968: 268, 269.

<sup>351</sup> KT E-34-36; TEKİN 1968: 269.

<sup>352</sup> KT N-2; TEKİN 1968: 270.

<sup>353</sup> KT N-5-7; TEKİN 1968: 270, 271.

Essentially, he used a lance 22 times, a saber once, and a bow once. It is also clearly understood that he was armored and he had also put on a helmet.

## 8. THE WEAPON TYPES OF THE TÜRK<sup>S</sup>

**Bow:** The most important single piece of equipment was the compound bow.<sup>354</sup> The Türk<sup>s</sup> had advanced compound bows that the Chinese described as follows: “The Tujue people have a bow which is compounded by glue which is produced from their legendary animal Qilin and the bow was reinforced by horns and they have arrows which have fletching by vulture feather.”<sup>355</sup> A bow and arrow were used by Kül Tegin several times to defeat his enemies according to his inscription.<sup>356</sup> The nomads were also famous for their prodigious skills in archery, the form of combat that was most closely associated with them. Al-Ğāhiz comments that: “If a thousand Türk horsemen charge and discharge a thousand arrows all at once, they prostrate a thousand men; and there is no other army which can charge as well.”<sup>357</sup> Arrow-heads were made of iron or bone in a variety of shapes, including armor-piercing types.<sup>358</sup> Poisoned arrows were also known.

Visual sources help us to view the form of the bows of the Türk<sup>s</sup>. A bone plate from Sutu-Bulak, Kirgizstan, depicts a very clear battle scene. Türk<sup>s</sup> with their long hair fight against their enemies using their composite reflex bows. (Figure 1) Various petroglyphs also involve the daily lives of the Türk<sup>s</sup> at that time. On a petroglyph from the Altai region, a Türk warrior with long braided hair draws his typical reflex bow on his knee. (Figure 2) Several other petroglyphs have different scenes. For instance, while some of them shoot on horseback backward, others are foot soldiers, and they draw their bows standing on their feet. Most of them are also described as having their quivers hanging on their belts. (Figure 3)

The pictorial sources demonstrate detailed representations in the early medieval art of the Türk<sup>s</sup>. The sarcophagus of Yu Hong (died in AD 592) was discovered in the northern city of Taiyuan. This Sogdian official held the rank of *sabao* and he was also an ambassador of the Sui Dynasty. There is a Türk shown on one of the tablets. On one of the panels of the sarcophagus, he turns backward and draws his composite bow against a predator that attacks them.<sup>359</sup> (Figure 4)

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<sup>354</sup> SINOR 1981: 140.

<sup>355</sup> Sü kao-seng-tschuan, Section 2, MAU-TSAI 1958: 37.

<sup>356</sup> “Kül Tegin mounted Bayirqu’s (white stallion) and attacked; he hit one man with an arrow...” E35-36; TEKİN 1968: 269.

<sup>357</sup> WALKER 1915: 666.

<sup>358</sup> GOLDEN 2011: 110.

<sup>359</sup> YATSENKO (04.04.2017).



A marble mortuary bed is located in Miho Museum, Japan. On the funerary couch, there are 11 panels and two gate panels. There are different stories and descriptions on all the panels. We can observe several nomadic people with their typical hairstyle and costumes on the carvings. One of the panels shows a hunting scene of the Türks in the mountains with their composite bows. They also carry quivers that can be seen in the details. (Figure 5)

In addition to the visual sources, there are noteworthy archaeological findings of bow and arrows. Erdélyi's research group excavated a Türk kurgan in Huna region, Mongolia. At a depth of 165 cm, they found a three-feathered iron arrowhead with a bone bead. Among the deeper lying rock pieces, the following fragmentary objects were found: a small arrowhead fragment with iron arrow spike, 12 cm wide fragment which may have belonged to a quiver. At a depth of 195 cm, two more three-feathered iron arrowheads were found. One of the arrowheads had a "whistling" bone bead in it. (Figure 6) Alongside the human skeleton were found some small fragments of the wooden parts of a composite bow.<sup>360</sup> (Figure 7)

**Spear and lance:** Next in importance to the bow, spears, and lances must be mentioned in the inventory of the traditional arsenal of Inner Asia.<sup>361</sup> Kül Tegin stabbed his enemies 22 times according to his memorial stone. It is the most widely-used weapon and it has more importance than any other weapon during his epic fights. Maybe the nomadic horsemen applied this weapon very often just after the bow.

They mostly preferred to use hollow and lighter spears on horseback. We can determine the features of the spears of the Türks, in contrast to those of the Arabs: "Your horsemen use heavy lances; however, hollow spears are lighter and more effective... Long lances must be used by pedestrian warriors and short spears must be used by horsemen."<sup>362</sup> From this criticism, it can be easily understood that the Türks preferred light spears on horseback. In addition to the written sources, many horsemen's depictions on the Altai petroglyphs had spears. (Figure 8)

**Dagger and saber:** Sometimes, an Inner Asian archer had to fight in close combat. His most widely used weapon, the saber, is attested in many shapes and sizes. It might be either straight and short like a dagger, as in the Scythian *akinakes*, or long, single or double edged. It might be pointed at the end, curved and sharpened on one side only, like a saber.<sup>363</sup>

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<sup>360</sup> ERDÉLYI 2000: 64-65.

<sup>361</sup> SINOR 1981: 141.

<sup>362</sup> ŞEŞEN 2002: 120.

<sup>363</sup> SINOR 1981: 141.

As the Scythians, bronze daggers were very common among Xiongnu. In North China, the ancient homeland of the Xiongnu, daggers made of bronze were found from archaeological sites in the Ordos region.<sup>364</sup> The length of the daggers were around 25-30 cm and the width of the daggers were around 2.5-3 cm. There was a dramatic decrease in the number of bronze daggers after the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries. This may have been due to the rapid rise of the sharper, stronger iron daggers. This situation had a direct relation with the use of hard iron armor worn in war. Also, protecting bronze from environmental factors was much more difficult than iron.<sup>365</sup> Hun bronze wedges were found mainly in the Inner Mongolia region of China. More than 200 wedges have been discovered in this region, and most of them were removed from the city of Ordos.<sup>366</sup>

While the bow and arrow were the most commonly used long-distance weapons by the Türks, the saber was one of the leading weapons of close combat. Saber was a more useful weapon than weapons such as arrows and spears that were likely to miss the target in windy weather. While mentioning the weapons of the Türks in the Chinese sources, the saber was definitely among these war tools: “They use bow, arrow, whistling arrow, armor, machete and ‘saber’ as weapons. They decorate their belts with a dagger.”<sup>367</sup> Again, Chinese sources mention that Türks played various games with sabers on special occasions.<sup>368</sup> According to what Taşağıl reported from Chinese sources, the Kirgiz produced weapons and sabers for the Türks. “Kirgiz found iron after every rain. Sharp weapons, called Jia-sha, were made of good iron and delivered to the Türks.”<sup>369</sup> Besides the Chinese sources, in the Kül Tegin Inscription, the use of the saber was mentioned only once: “In hand-to-hand fighting, he cut down the seventh man with a saber (N-5).”<sup>370</sup>

After looking at the written sources, the archaeological findings also give us important visual data about the sabers of the Türks. In one of the kurgans in the Kem region, a saber was found which is believed to belong to the Kirgiz of the Türk period. The saber is in the scabbard which is covered with metal. The blade of the saber is straight and wide, and the handle is thin. There are two hanging loops on the scabbard, one just below the handle and the other on the body so that it can be hung on the belt with a strap.<sup>371</sup> (Figure 9) Another saber, thought to belong

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<sup>364</sup> EBERHARD 1943: 5.

<sup>365</sup> MENG 2008: 39-49.

<sup>366</sup> LIN 2007: 100-102.

<sup>367</sup> DİVİTÇİOĞLU 1987: 206; TAŞAĞIL 2012: 97

<sup>368</sup> EBERHARD 1943: 5.

<sup>369</sup> TAŞAĞIL 2004: 84.

<sup>370</sup> KT N-5; TEKİN 1968: 270.

<sup>371</sup> ESİN 1978: XLV/C.

to the Türks, was unearthed from the Kudirge kurgan in the Altai. Unfortunately, the saber could not be preserved in its full shape. Three metal rings were found on the scabbard of the saber.<sup>372</sup> When the parts of the saber are combined, it can be observed that the saber has a long and straight shape. (Figure 10) Two iron sabers belonging to the Türk period were found from the Besh Tash Koroo kurgan in the region of the Tengri Mountains in Kirgizstan. Although we do not have clear visual resources, it is understood that one of the sabers is in the scabbard. It is noteworthy that both of the sabers are slightly curved.<sup>373</sup> (Figure 11) A sculpture found in the Bortala region of Xinjiang gives us an idea about the sabers used by the Türks. The statue, which has been preserved in a good condition, has a long, straight saber hanging from its belt in its left hand. This saber is depicted in a scabbard tied to the belt with its straps at two points.<sup>374</sup> (Figure 12) The Afrasiyab wall paintings refer to the 7<sup>th</sup> century Sogdian murals, discovered in 1965 in the residential part of ancient Samarqand. They form the most famous cycle, which was found in the so-called “Hall of the Ambassadors”. In these wall paintings, we can see some weaponry details of the Türks, especially regarding their sabers.<sup>375</sup> (Figure 13)

There are some archaeological findings of daggers too. Several Turkic sculptures from the Altai Mountains carry daggers on their belt. The sculptures from Toto and Kypchyl are good examples where one can observe curved daggers on the front side of their belts. (Figure 14) Between the 5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> centuries, it was very common to practice funerary arts, such as decorating mortuary beds with carvings and paintings. Most of these have multicultural presentment scenes including Central Asian nomads.<sup>376</sup> The granite mortuary bed of the Sogdian official An Qie and his wife shows a dagger carrying on his belt. (Figure 15)

It is seen that the saber types in different periods had different phases. The results of archaeological studies show us that short sabers were more common in the Scythian and Hun periods. When it comes to the Türk Qaganate period, we see that the use of long, thin, and straight sabers increased. Likewise, in the period of the Uyгур Qaganate, long sabers were more prominent than short sabers. However, we can say that curved sabers started to become widespread during Türk and Uyгур periods. So how did these saber stages originate and why did the steppe warriors make a transition from short sabers to longer sabers? The biggest reason for this must be the widespread use of sabers on horseback. Because short sabers were not long enough for cavalry. The war depiction of the Scythian period on the Solokha gold comb actually

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<sup>372</sup> ÖGEL 1984: 310.

<sup>373</sup> STARK 2008: 532.

<sup>374</sup> STARK 2008: 531.

<sup>375</sup> YATSENKO (04.04.2017).

<sup>376</sup> For detailed Chinese funerary traditions and mortuary beds please see: LERNER 2005.

summarizes the situation for us. While the mounted warrior uses a short spear instead of a saber, the pedestrian warrior uses a short saber or dagger. This proves that the Scythians, who did not yet have metal stirrups and wooden saddles, did not commonly use long sabers on horseback. However, this situation changed after the invention of the metal stirrup and wooden frame saddle. These two elements increased the mobility of the cavalry on the horse and strengthened the hitting power of the cavalry in battle. It is not known exactly when the non-metal stirrup was used for the first time, but the inventor of the metal stirrup was the Türks who had a horse culture and it was first used as military equipment in the early period of the Türks. With the use of stirrups, there is no doubt that the effectiveness of the cavalry at the moment of hitting the enemy increased. On the one hand, the cavalry, supported by the stirrups, was able to balance on the horse more comfortably thanks to the saddle with wooden eyebrows on the front and rear sides. In this way, the use of the saber on horseback has become easier. As a result, depending on the invention of metal stirrups and wooden saddles, the short sabers used in the Scythian and Hun periods were replaced by long and curved sabers that were more suitable for use on the horse during the periods of Türk Qaganate.<sup>377</sup>

Consequently, the stirrup must have existed before the appearance of the saber, as without it the saber could not be used from horseback. The stirrup is also required for shooting backward with the bow.<sup>378</sup>

**Armor:** Archaeological evidence indicates that at least some portion of the Türk army consisted of heavy cavalry alongside the light cavalry bowmen of the Eurasian Steppe armies.<sup>379</sup> Based on information from Kül Tegin Inscription, he was most probably guarded by his armor and his helmet. Although he was hit by many arrows, he did not obtain any injury during the war of Ming-sha Mountain (AD 706).<sup>380</sup>

Armour (*yariq*) was widespread, but metal armor appears to have been rather more limited to the elite. Some types of armor were made of both metallic and non-metallic substances.<sup>381</sup> According to Al-Ğāhiz, the Türks were proud of using light armor made with felt: “And we make armor of felt, and have stirrups and breastplates.”<sup>382</sup>

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<sup>377</sup> KAHRAMAN 2019: 61-62

<sup>378</sup> ERDÉLYI 2000: 90-91.

<sup>379</sup> GOLDEN 2011: 100.

<sup>380</sup> TEKİN 1968: 269.

<sup>381</sup> GOLDEN 2011: 109.

<sup>382</sup> WALKER 1915: 646.

**Horse Armour:** Horses were also armored, some of them lightly, others more heavily.<sup>383</sup> Only one passage in the Kül Tegin Inscription refers to horse armor. Visual sources, such as the Altai petroglyphs, prove that horses were mostly armored with lamellar armor.

## 9. SADDLE AND STIRRUPS

The invention of the stirrup and saddle is revolutionary, and it is as important as the invention of the wheel. These two items dramatically widened the combat capabilities and increased the power of the cavalry shock. Nobody knows who invented the non-metallic stirrups. But metal stirrups, as a military ornament, were widely used in the early Türk Qaganate times. On the other hand, the saddle was known before Türks and Avars in the Xiongnu time. These items, which were devised by nomads as a result of the necessity of steppe culture, were introduced to the sedentary neighbour empires like China, Byzantine, Persia, and Arabs. Sitting on a strong saddle with a rigid frame and abutting feet in the stirrup, the riders received extraordinary freedom of movement that could affect the combat tactics.<sup>384</sup>

Those inventions occurred in history as a necessity of the horseback culture, and furthermore, the movement freedom of the warrior increased and the war tactics changed thanks to those of hardware. After the usage of these inventions, the horseback warriors improved their skills on mainly four warfare dramatically.

First of all, a new method has been developed for the use of the spear, which is often used by the equestrian warrior in close combat. There is no doubt that the use of stirrups increased the effectiveness of the horsemen at the time of clashing with the enemy. The cavalry, supported by its legs, has the possibility of striking the enemy easily with the power of the horse without extra effort on the spear that is pinched under the armpit. Besides stirrups, saddles that had wooden eyebrows on the front and back sides have prevented the warrior from falling on the horse, sliding forward or back in the event of a collision. The iron stirrup gave stability to the horseman and immensely increased the warrior's ability to damage his enemy.<sup>385</sup>

Secondly, equestrian archery tactics have changed. While the horse is galloping, it is very difficult for the warrior to make an arrow shot, and redress the balance without stirrups and saddle. However, the cavalry succeeded in being able to shoot easily with the help of stirrups on the horse. In addition, the warrior had the opportunity to stand up in four directions

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<sup>383</sup> GOLDEN 2011: 110.

<sup>384</sup> SOLOV'EV: (04.04.2017).

<sup>385</sup> WHITE 1962: 2.

with the support of the stirrups and shoot without hitting the horse's neck. This has improved the style of bowing backward and has caused the enemy to be hurt even while escaping.

Thirdly, that warfare made the heavy armor's usage more practical on horseback. Because the cavalry -as extraordinary freedom of movement by sitting on a solid built-up roof that allows it to be held firmly on its horse's back, while at the same time supporting itself with its feet with the help of stirrups.<sup>386</sup> So even with heavy armor, the maneuvers of the warrior on the horse have become faster. In addition, while the heavy armored cavalry was falling from the back of the horse with the slightest stroke the warrior stood firmer on the horse's back after the use of stirrups and saddles.

Fourth and last, stirrups and saddles led to the use of long and curved sabers. Earlier, Scythians and Xiongnu warriors used rather shorter sabers or daggers. But it was not useful for cavalry warriors. Therefore, unlike short sabers, Türk cavalry warriors used long sabers, which increased their success in battles. As a result, due to the widespread use of metal stirrups and wooden saddles, long sabers that were more suitable for horseback fighting were used in the period of Türk Qaganate.<sup>387</sup>

### **9.1. The etymology of stirrups and saddle**

Zimonyi, in his work, researched the etymology of stirrups viewpoint of language history. Reporting from his study firstly Gombocz assumed that the common Turkic *üzengi*, Chuvash *yărana*, and Mongolian *dörüge* 'stirrup' are related. Then Poppe and Ramstedt reconstructed the Proto-Turkic *yüzāñü* which can be explained from the Altaic form *δ'ürāngi*. Doerfer and Róna-Tas refused to accept the assumption because the Mongolian form *dörüge(n)* is from *dörü* 'nose ring from iron or rope'. As for the Turkic forms, the Old Chuvash reconstruction is *irāñä*, from which the present Chuvash *yărana* can be properly explained. The y-prothesis in Chuvash phonetics is a well-known change justified by other parallels. The common Turkic reflect two prototypes: *üzengü* in Oguz, Kipchak and Turkic language groups, and *izeŋge* in Siberian Turkic languages (Baraba, Khakass, Tuvay, Yakut, Yellow Uygur). The Chuvash form shows similarities with the Turkic languages spoken in Siberia. In any case, the stirrup belonged to the common vocabulary of the Turkic languages, before the Chuvash-type Turkic and the Common Turkic languages were separated. Therefore, the invention and spread of the stirrup can provide a chronological framework for Turkic language history as well.<sup>388</sup>

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<sup>386</sup> SOLOV'EV 2013.

<sup>387</sup> KAHRAMAN 2019: 37, 62.

<sup>388</sup> ZIMONYI 2018a: 317.

In addition to the etymological analysis of the stirrups, it is worthy to have a look to the written Turkic sources. The oldest etymology of *üzengi* in Turkic sources was found in an old Uygur text by Şinasi Tekin. In the second part Maytrisimit, written in the Old Uygur Turkic, Buddha's one of 32 distinctive signs is mentioned as follows: *ming kigelig tilgenin yarataglag tamga ayasinta izengülükinte begiz belgülig közünür*. Which means: "On the palm of his hand and on the sole of his foot, a thousand-spoked wheel mark is clearly visible." The term *izengülük* is used as the sole of the foot here. According to Tekin, this is the first encounter with the etymology stirrups.<sup>389</sup> On the other hand, the use of the word as equipment of horse was first used in Kutadgu Bilig in the 11<sup>th</sup> century AD as follows: *kara tapsa begler bedüyür kopar - üzengü bar erse çigen berk kapar*. This means: "If the people do the task, the begs grow up and rise; If there is a stirrup, the people keep the halter strong."<sup>390</sup> After these, Tekin concludes that the term was used as sole at the beginning. But later it became the equipment of horse as stirrups.<sup>391</sup>

Talat Tekin is the first one who backs dating of the term saddle. According to him, a word combination states in the Bilge Qagan Inscription refers to a *saddled horse*.<sup>392</sup> The old form of stirrups in Old Turkic was 'eder' in *Dîwân Lughat at-Turk*.<sup>393</sup>

At the moment we have limited data on the use of etymology stirrups and saddle for the first time. However, of course, the history of the use of this two equipment is hundreds of years older than the etymologies we have identified.

## 9.2. Saddle in the archaeological findings

**Pazyryk and Shibe:** The first of the soft type of saddles appeared; these were simple rugs, then two cushions connected to each other. The hard type had a wooden structure. It developed somewhere on the border of the settled and nomadic worlds, in the contact area of the pastoral and agricultural zones in northern China.<sup>394</sup> Saddles were known before the Türks, from Xiongnu times. There were several saddles unearthed. In the third and fifth kurgans at Pazyryk and at Shibe in the High Altai, rather primitive saddles were found (5-4<sup>th</sup> centuries BC).<sup>395</sup>

**Chertomlyk:** In ancient Western Asia and Greco-Roman era, the shape of the saddle did not change and nothing better than rugs was found. However, in the Steppes, in the latter

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<sup>389</sup> TEKİN 2001: 75-79

<sup>390</sup> ARAT 1959: 437.

<sup>391</sup> Ş. TEKİN 2001: 75-79.

<sup>392</sup> TEKİN 1968: 365.

<sup>393</sup> ATALAY 1985: 224.

<sup>394</sup> SOLOV'EV 2003.

<sup>395</sup> MAENCHEN-HELFEN 1973: 208.

half of the Scythian Age, the rugs were improved a little, and thick cushions appeared. On the silver Amphora-shaped rhyton, which was unearthed from Chertomlyk kurgan, the northern coast of the Black Sea in the latter half of 4<sup>th</sup> century BC, a scene depicted. A Scythian warrior ties a horse attaching to the harness. On the back of the horses, not mere rugs but also cinch and a martingale were fixed and both the front and back edges stand up (not so high as front bows of hard type saddles in later ages).<sup>396</sup>

**Noin Ula:** Belonging to Xiongnu (1<sup>st</sup> Century AD) a wooden framed saddle with front and back pillows were unearthed. This proves that Xiongnu people used the saddle from the first centuries AD.<sup>397</sup> Some archaeologists think that more developed wooden framed saddles were invented in the Eurasian Steppes in the 3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> centuries. It is estimated that those saddles were brought to the West by the Huns of Attila.<sup>398</sup>

**Kudirge:** Among the archaeological remains of Kudirge Kurgan AD 6-7<sup>th</sup> Centuries a more advanced saddle frame of the Türk Qaganate era with wild animal depictions was found.<sup>399</sup> When we examine all the saddle remains in chronological order, we arrive at the result that the saddle type developed further during the Türk Qaganate period. (Figure 16)

### 9.3. Stirrups' invention

It is reasonable to suppose that rope or leather stirrups preceded the metal ones by a few hundred years.<sup>400</sup> According to Sinor: "The beginning of the use of non-metallic stirrups is difficult to determine, partly because many of them were made from organic materials such as wood and leather, which tend to disintegrate when buried in the ground."<sup>401</sup>

The stirrup first appeared together with saddles of a solid wooden framework, as early as the AD 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> century in Siberia and the Altai (Hakassia), while the data from Khorezm are even earlier, from the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC (Bazar-kala). Some of the most important data for us derives from the history of the Han Dynasty, also from the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC. There also exists data from the Scythians, likewise from the 3<sup>rd</sup> and even the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC.<sup>402</sup> In the depiction of the horse in the Chertomlyk vase, there is a stirrup hanging down from the saddle. Some researchers have pointed to the possibility that this may be the tether or leather stirrup, as the

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<sup>396</sup> HAYASHI 1995: 65.

<sup>397</sup> MAENCHEN-HELFEN 1973: 209.

<sup>398</sup> HAYASHI 1995: 67.

<sup>399</sup> MALAYEV 2010: 50.

<sup>400</sup> RÓNA-TAS 1986: 52.

<sup>401</sup> SINOR 1981: 137.

<sup>402</sup> ERDÉLYI 2000: 71.



predecessor of the metal stirrup.<sup>403</sup> Based on the 4th century BC, this visual is the oldest available stirrup data. (Figure 17)

It has always been a matter of controversy who invented the stirrups or which territory of Asia it was invented for the first time. Some claim that the first metal stirrups were found in China between the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries AD in excavations; they were depicted in reliefs, sculptures, paintings, and textual descriptions.<sup>404</sup> But some archaeological evidence proves that metal stirrups existed earlier, in Xiongnu time. In the light of the above, Erdélyi's find precedes the Korean and Chinese finds as the first known iron stirrup. We cannot yet define the origin and provenance of the stirrup, and the Duulga-Uul stirrup fragment is but an addendum, albeit a very important one, to the history of the harness.<sup>405</sup>

On the other hand, several scholars claim that the Türks used the stirrups for the first time as war equipment. "As a horse armament, it has been claimed that Türks invented the hard saddle with two stirrups so well suited for warfare".<sup>406</sup> Róna-Tas, studying the linguistic background of the Turkic denomination of stirrup, came to the conclusion that "the metal stirrup appeared not earlier than the Türk Empire in the 6<sup>th</sup> century."<sup>407</sup> Recently, David A. Graff has pointed out that East Asian early medieval military technology was a product of cooperation between China and the steppe nomads. The area of contact between settled peoples and nomads took place in North China, where steppe dynasties gained power.<sup>408</sup>

#### **9.4. Stirrups in the archaeological findings**

**Duulga-Uul kurgan:** One of the outstanding, though fragmentary finds of our excavations at Duulga-Uul in 1971 was the stirrup from kurgan grave No. 7. The find assemblage cannot be more recent than the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD and definitely shows Xiongnu ethnic features. This finding could be the oldest archaeological data about metal stirrups.<sup>409</sup> (Figure 18)

**Stirrups of Xiamintun:** A wooden stirrup covered with bronze dated 4<sup>th</sup> century AD was found in China, Henan Province, Xiamintun region.<sup>410</sup> Only one piece of stirrup stands on the left side of the saddle. Which had probably different roles from the pair of stirrups that used

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<sup>403</sup> HAYASHI 1995: 69; MINNS 1913: 160.

<sup>404</sup> NEEDHAM 1986: 16. Pelliot noted that the nomads from Inner Asia innovated the stirrup and they taught the Chinese the tricks of riding. The "real" stirrup came from Inner Asia to China between 200 and 400. (PELLIOT 1925-1926: 259-262.)

<sup>405</sup> ERDÉLYI 2000: 90-91.

<sup>406</sup> GOLDEN 1996: 16-20.

<sup>407</sup> RÓNA-TAS 1986: 52.

<sup>408</sup> GRAFF 2016: 141.

<sup>409</sup> ERDÉLYI 2000: 90.

<sup>410</sup> HAYASHI 1995: 66.

by the cavalries? Albert E. Dien mentions the possibility that this kurgan may belong to the Xianbei people who dominated the north of China for a while.<sup>411</sup> In addition to this, Barthold claims that this tribe was Turkic speaking.<sup>412</sup>

**Changsha figurine:** Again, one of the oldest findings of the stirrups was that of a small cavalry figurine unearthed in the Changsha region of China, which is dated to the Jin Dynasty period (AD 265-420). But the appearance of the figurine carries the nomadic culture. The shape of the face and the style of the clothing is a very typical nomad.<sup>413</sup> (Figure 19)

**Archaeological Remains from the Türk Qaganate Era:** In the Altai Republic, at the border between Russia, Kazakhstan, and Mongolia, stirrups with elongated suspension loops were found. Burial assemblages from that region have been attributed to the Türk Qaganate.<sup>414</sup> Several archaeological excavations from the Kochkor Valley, Kirgizstan, also revealed the remains of several stirrups. In one of the graves, a Turkic burial was found with a horse and stirrups at the same archaeological site. (Figures 20-21) On the left side of the Hünii River, in the district of Naimaa-Tolgoi, a stony burial vault was found. Under the stones, at a depth of 55 cm, the following items belong to the Türk Qaganate period were found: a pair of iron stirrups with wide sole, an iron bit with an S-shaped bar.<sup>415</sup> (Figure 22)

Finally, as a pictorial source, the Altai petroglyphs show several horsemen using stirrups while hunting. (Figure 23)

**Warriors of Astana:** A number of wooden and terracotta figures were excavated near Astana. The excavations correspond to the Eastern Jin and Sui-Tang Dynasties in China (4<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> centuries AD). They are exhibited in the Xinjiang Museum. Many figures of horsemen using stirrups were excavated in the Late Tang burials within the same cemetery near Astana. According to Gumilev, those figures belong to the Türk Qaganate period.<sup>416</sup> (Figure 24)

### 9.5. Sedentary people met the stirrups and the saddle

Chinese learned how to ride horses, and wore pants in the Warring States, Wu-ling-wang period for the first time. Later on, they began using soft saddles in that period.<sup>417</sup> Seeing that their heavy horse carriages remained weak in the face of the Xiongnu, the Chinese began to give importance to the cavalry.<sup>418</sup> Nomad cavalry clothing such as trousers, kaftan, and boots

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<sup>411</sup> DIEN 1986: 33.

<sup>412</sup> BARTHOLD 2004: 25.

<sup>413</sup> DIEN 1986: 37.

<sup>414</sup> CURTA 2008: 309.

<sup>415</sup> ERDÉLYI 2000: 66.

<sup>416</sup> KOMISSAROV 2015: 62-75.

<sup>417</sup> HAYASHI 1995: 65.

<sup>418</sup> DIEN 1986: 37.

were used by Chinese army for the first time in 4<sup>th</sup> century BC.<sup>419</sup> To be able to fight against the nomads, Chinese emperor Zhao did reform for the Chinese army in 307 BC.<sup>420</sup> These data can also prove that stirrups and the saddle were used in the steppe by the nomads much earlier than Chinese people. As for the literary sources on the stirrup, Chinese data deserve attention first. Pelliot noted that the first mention is in Zhang Jing'er's biography which can be dated to 477.<sup>421</sup> Boodberg found data on the stirrup in the biography of Wang Luan in 399. The record mentions as follows: "The unusually strong man did not need the help of the stirrup to mount on the horse."<sup>422</sup> So, the Chinese chroniclers recorded the use of the stirrup in the 5<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>423</sup>

In Rome and Byzantium, up to AD 700 in all reliefs, the horses are without stirrups.<sup>424</sup> Avars, who was driven from the Central Asian steppes to the West by the Türks, began to introduce the stirrups to Europe. In the written sources, the name stirrup is mentioned as σκαλα (from Latin: *skala*) in the work of Mauricius for the first time in the Byzantine sources. In AD 580, the Byzantine Emperor Mauricius understood the importance of the stirrups and emphasized the necessity of use in his army.<sup>425</sup>

Iranian civilization has also met with the stirrups after the Türks. When we compare the equestrian depictions on metal plates in the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, which represent two different periods in Iranian art, we have obtained important details. The first plate belongs to 4<sup>th</sup> century AD, and the cavalry doesn't use the stirrups. The second plate represents 7<sup>th</sup> century AD and now we can observe stirrups and saddle on the horseback. This proves that the use of stirrup is not only learned by the Byzantines but also the Iranians through the Türks in the 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> centuries. (Figure 25)

The earliest mention of the stirrup is in the hadīth-literature in connection with the Prophet Muhammad. Abu Dawud (888) contains: "I saw the Messenger of God preaching to the people on Dhul-Hijjah on a camel standing at the stirrups (*rikāb*)."<sup>419</sup> Whereas the Saḥīḥ Collection from the 9<sup>th</sup> century recorded: "When the Prophet put his feet in the stirrup (*ġarz*) and the she-camel got up carrying him..."<sup>420</sup> There is another datum in the description of the Battle of Hunan 630: "Abu Sufyan was holding the stirrup (ركاب *rikāb*) of the mule of the Messenger of God."<sup>421</sup> Lane clarified in his dictionary that *ġarz* means a leather stirrup attached to a camel's saddle, while *rikāb* is a stirrup made of iron, copper, or wood. The collections of Abu Dawud

<sup>419</sup> ÇANDARLIOĞLU 2004: 43.

<sup>420</sup> ÖGEL 1981: 93-99.

<sup>421</sup> PELLLOT 1925-1926: 259.

<sup>422</sup> BOODBERG 1979a: 112.

<sup>423</sup> ZIMONYI 2018a: 318.

<sup>424</sup> Ş. TEKİN 2001: 72.

<sup>425</sup> LUTTWAK 2009: 72.

and at-Tirmidhi (893) preserved a report about Ali from 661: “Ali ibn Rabi'ah said: I was present with Ali while a beast was brought to him to ride. When he put his foot in the stirrup (ركاب *rikāb*), he said: “In the name of God”. These reports can be dated to the middle of the 6th century but were recorded in the 9<sup>th</sup> century. Consequently, the use of the iron stirrup at that time is not probable, since the appearance of the iron stirrups appeared in other Muslim literary sources at the end of the 6th century.<sup>426</sup> In addition to the sources written in the 9<sup>th</sup> century, Ş. Tekin claims that Arabs met the metal stirrups at the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> century AD when they first entered Central Asia.<sup>427</sup>

Summing up, the stirrups are recorded first in Chinese sources in 399, and in 477, the Byzantine military history mentioned the stirrups around 600, while the Muslim authors dated the appearance of the iron stirrups in the 690s.<sup>428</sup>

### **9.6. Stirrups' effect on the history**

Even though it is a matter of debate regarding whether the iron stirrup and saddle were nomadic or Chinese inventions, or if they could be the result of close cooperation between the Chinese and the nomads, these inventions made possible the use of heavy armored cavalry among the nomad warriors. The Türk army, which consisted of light and partly heavy cavalry, used its distinctive weapons such as lances and sabers in addition to their bows and arrows. This provided them with an excellent possibility to gain military superiority in establishing the Türk Qaganate. The spread of stirrups to the East (Korea and Japan) and to the West Islamic world, Byzantium, and Europe is connected with the formation and the era of the Türk Qaganate.

The Türk Qaganate played a decisive role in spreading the stirrup on the Eurasian Steppe. After the fall of the first Türk Qaganate, the Khazars established their empire on the steppe of Eastern Europe in the middle of the 7<sup>th</sup> century. As a successor state of the Western Türk Qaganate they obviously continued the usage of stirrup tradition.<sup>429</sup>

Both stirrups and saddles' invention go back to the old times. And it was a technology that developed over the centuries. The period when wooden frame saddle and metal stirrup started to be used as complete military equipment coincides with the period when the Türk Qaganate started to appear on the stage of history (early 6th century). The Türks, who were blacksmithing under Ruanruan, had obviously reached an advanced level in ironworking and

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<sup>426</sup> ZIMONYI 2018a: 320.

<sup>427</sup> Ş. TEKİN 2001: 73.

<sup>428</sup> ZIMONYI 2018a: 329-330.

<sup>429</sup> ZIMONYI 2018a: 321.

had also started the production of metal stirrups. After these dates, the Türks started to get stronger and they established an empire stretching from Manchuria to Crimea. For the first time in history, a nomad political power's borders reached such a wide area.<sup>430</sup>

The Avars, who fled westward from the pressure of the Türks, also brought the stirrup technology with themselves. The Avars brought the stirrup into the Carpathian Basin in 568. In the early Avar period, stirrups were generally long-eared, round in shape and ribbed, and made of high-quality iron. Stirrup was passed to Europe by the Avars through the Byzantines. According to Lynn White, feudalism wouldn't be possible without this equipment in Europe.<sup>431</sup> According to him, a few centuries after the Avars introduced the metal stirrup to Europe feudal state structures were established with this equipment. After the stirrups arrived in Europe, the state gave fields to the knights who had gained power in exchange for a promise to help the state when needed. As a result of the division of these lands to vassals over time, the elite class that fought each other was formed.<sup>432</sup> In addition, each fief owner had sub-vassals attached to him. As a result, a typical hierarchical order has occurred. This profoundly affected Western European society and history and led to the formation of the feudal order.<sup>433</sup>

With the use of stirrups in Europe, a new social class has formed, while in China, war and army methods have changed.<sup>434</sup> After the stirrups being used as military equipment during the Tang empire period, a transition from a defensive state structure to an aggressive and expanding structure was made. This Chinese dynasty expanded its borders beyond Central China and occupied Central Asia.

Pipes discussed the emergence and survival of Muslim military slavery and its institutional system in a monograph. He stated that Islam may have played a significant role in its formation. In addition, three other factors have to be considered: climatic conditions, the migration of the Türks, and the appearance of the iron stirrup. The significance of the stirrup was that the stallion-rich nomads gained military superiority over settled and densely populated areas with its application, which could be compensated by various strategies. In Islamic territories, this dilemma was solved by inviting nomadic Türks to the army of the Caliphate. This concept is also debated.<sup>435</sup>

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<sup>430</sup> KAHRAMAN 2017: 464.

<sup>431</sup> WHITE 1962: 28; SZÁDECZKY 1983: 326.

<sup>432</sup> WHITE 1962: 28-30.

<sup>433</sup> DIBON-SIMITH 2017: 103.

<sup>434</sup> DIEN 1986: 33.

<sup>435</sup> PIPES 1981: 55-58. ZIMONYI 2018a: 316.

### CHAPTER III

#### HIERARCHICAL ORDER OF THE TÜRK QAGANATE

Several important Chinese sources attempt to offer a hierarchical organization of Türk titles in the form of lists, in which titles are presented in order of decreasing authority. These lists do not agree with one another completely. Those found in Zhou-shu, Bei Shi, and Sui-shu all give essentially the same structure; after the *qagan* and his consort, the *qatun* (*ke-ha-dun*), are listed the *yabgu* (*ye-hu*), *šad* (*she*), *tegin* (*te-jin*), *elteber* (*xie-li-fa*), and *tudun* (*tu-tun-fa*), followed by many lower titles which are not specified. Jiu Tang-shu, however, mentions both the *qagan* and *qatun*, and then states that the *qagan*'s younger brothers and sons are called *tegin*s, and those (possibly from among the *tegin*s) who command troops of the other tribes are called *šads*. After that, the high officials of the empire are named in the following order: *Küli Čor* (*Qu-li-chuo*), *apa* (*a-po*), *elteber* (*xie-li-fa*), *tudun* (*tu-tun*), and *erkin* (*si-jin*). The title of *yabgu* is not mentioned. Xin Tang-shu attempts to combine these lists and so follows the general order of Jiu Tang-shu, but places the *šads* prior to the *tegin*s and adds *yabgu* before *küli čor*, after which are listed *apa*, *elteber* (*xie-li-fa*), *tudun*, and *erkin*. The text then adds three titles after *erkin*: *yan-hong-da* (Turkic form unknown), a second corresponds to those given in Zhou-shu, Bei Shi, and Sui-shu. It would appear that the second list actually refers to an earlier period in contrast with the first.

A different structure is given for the Western Türks. According to Tongdian, their highest titles were *yabgu*, *šad*, and *tegin*, the bearers of which were appointed from among either the *qagan*'s sons or the younger brothers, or members of the imperial clan. Other titles in descending order are *erkin* (*yi-jin*), *küli čor* (*Qu-li-chuo*), *yan-hong-da*, *elteber*, *tudun*, and *erkin*. Jiu Tang-shu gives the same list, with the omission of the *šad*.

From these schematic organizations, we can see that the highest titles (after *qagan*) appear to have been *yabgu*, *šad*, and *tegin*, but their relationship to one another within the hierarchy is not always clear, particularly in the case of the *yabgu*, who is not even mentioned in some of the hierarchical schematizations. It would seem, in fact, that those relationships could change. The Old Turkic inscriptions refer to the supreme *qagan* appointing *yabgu*s and *šads* over subordinate groups. Clearly, these men were intended to administer specific peoples and territories.<sup>436</sup>

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<sup>436</sup> DROMPP 1989: 93-94.

On the other hand, if we look at Bilge Qagan inscription, when his father, Elterish Qagan, ascended the throne (682), the following was the order of the chief men:

“When my father Türk Bilge Qagan, succeeded to the throne, the faithful Türk lords, westward the Tarduš lords – Küli Čor at the head and šadapit lords – eastwards the Töles lords – Apa Tarqan at the head and the šadapit lords... Taman Tarqan, Tonyuquq, Boyla Baya Tarqan, and (other) high officials... court officials – Sebig Kül Erkin at the head and (other) officials – this many faithful lords...”<sup>437</sup>

A careful study of the source reveals an interesting point. First, that the Orkhon Inscriptions lack *yabgu*, *šad*, and *tegin* from the list of chiefs of the empire. This can presumably be explained by the fact that they were probably included in the royal family of the ruler (*ulayu iniygünim oylanım biriki oyušım bodunım... I. S 1, II. N 1*).<sup>438</sup>

Saadettin Gömeç and Abdulkadir Inan did a general study about titles in Turkic sources. Liu Mau-Tsai, who previously translated parts of the Chinese sources belonging to the Türks into German, says that there are 28 ranks and titles in the Türks based on these documents.<sup>439</sup> On the other hand, Gömeç found 58 titles in his study based on Turkic sources. However, some of the titles in Gömeç’s work are adjectival titles rather than administrative titles.

## 1. QAGAN

The Qagan had the supreme power of the nomad state. And he was the head of the whole state organization. To emphasize the qagan’s importance in the nomad state we can have a look at the runic inscriptions of the Türks. As claimed in the Türk inscriptions, the qagan appointed by God to this task as the ruler of the whole earth, that is, humanity: “When the blue sky above and the reddish-brown earth below were created, between the two human beings were created. Over human beings, my ancestors Bumin Qagan and Ištemi Qagan became rulers. After they had become rulers, they organized and ruled the state and institutions of the Türk people.”<sup>440</sup>

Türk qagan regulated the domestic and foreign politics as the head of the state; decided to make war and to conclude peace; commanded the armies in wars and raids; sent ambassadors;

<sup>437</sup> “kisrā tarduš bağlār küli čor başlayu ulayu šadapit bağlār öñrā tölis bağlār apa tarqan başlayu ulayu šad[apit] bağlār bu ..... taman tarqan toñuquq boyla bayā tarqan ulayu buyruq .... iç buyruq säbig kül erkin başlayu ulayu buyruq”: KT S 13-14; TEKİN 1968: 280.

<sup>438</sup> DOBROVITS 2004: 182.

<sup>439</sup> MAU-TSAI 1958: 8, 132, 179.

<sup>440</sup> KT E 1; TEKİN 1968: 263.

appointed or dismissed officials at all levels of the state organization. He used his authority and sanctioned power over the officials of the state.

### 1.1. The origin of the word qagan

There are different views on the origin of the qagan title. It has been suggested that the origin of this title may be Chinese, Mongolian, or Sogdian. Furthermore, suggestions involving Tungusic and Korean are also present. For the first time, according to Shiratori this title, which was seen at the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, belongs to She-lun (391-410 AD), the leader of the Ruanruan.<sup>441</sup> However, according to the opinion that gained weight in recent years, the title “qagan” was used for the first time in 261 and 278 by the Xianbei.<sup>442</sup> In the Orkhon Inscriptions, only the title of qagan (qγn) was used alongside the name of the Turkic rulers.<sup>443</sup> According to Vovin none of the attempts is correct. He rather suggests an alternative suggestion of this title, which does not involve any of the languages mentioned above. Based on the Chinese sources Xiongnu used another ruler title beside Chan-yu which is *Ga-Ga*. Vovin rewrites the reconstruction of the Xiongnu title as *qa-Ga*. On the basis on the discussions, *qa-Ga* which is used to be interpreted as ‘crown prince’, is interpreted as ‘great ruler’ by Vovin. It seems to be quite likely that the ultimate source of both *qagan* and *qan* can be tracked to Xiongnu and Yeniseian. The original Xiongnu terms *qa-Ga* ‘great ruler’ was borrowed initially by Xianbei with a further addition of the Mongolic singular -n and plural -d. Vovin’s theory offers a new reconstruction for the title *qagan*. He claims that *Qa-* means ‘great’ in Yeniseian language. Additionally -n in qagan is a Mongolic origin suffix. He concludes that *qagan* title was originated from Yeniseian language and it passed to Xiongnu and later to the Türks via Xianbei.<sup>444</sup>

### 1.2. Different qagan concepts

The title “qagan” is a well-known one that predated the Turkic period and remained in usage long after it. Among the early Türks, a qagan was essentially an independent ruler over a specific people or confederation. The Old Turkic Inscriptions speak not only of the qagan of the Türks but also of the qagans of other people’s such as the Kirghiz and Türgish. Even the rulers of Tibet and China are referred to as qagans.<sup>445</sup>

By “subordinate qagan” is meant a male member of the ruling Türk A-shi-na clan who, while not the supreme qagan of the Türk Empire, held the title of qagan nonetheless. The

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<sup>441</sup> MAU-TSAI 1958: 18; SHIRATORI 1945: 504.

<sup>442</sup> EBERHARD 1945: 328-333; MAU-TSAI 1958: 18.

<sup>443</sup> TEKİN 1968: 1-59.

<sup>444</sup> VOVIN 2007: 177-187.

<sup>445</sup> DROMPP 1989: 92.



existence of many such qagans is well attested in Chinese sources, which refer to them by a variety of names and titles, the most well-known being “small” qagan (xiao ke-han), which is contrasted with the “great” qagan (da ke-han). A better translation for these terms would be “subordinate” and “supreme” qagan.

In regard to the title qagan Tongdian refers to the “wolf qagan” (böri [Fu-li] qagan) and claims that this title is given to those who are bloodthirsty. The passage goes on to state that “there are also qagans whose rank is below that of the yabgu(s).” The “house qagans” (*ev [yi] qagans*), came from among the great families of the Türks.<sup>446</sup>

### 1.3. The rituals of qagan investiture

The Türk ceremony of qagan investiture had similar characters of the shamanic rituals. According to the Zhou-shu: “When a new ruler is chosen, the highest dignitaries carry him from his closest associates in a felt carpet and holding him in the direction of the sun, they spin him nine times. At each turn, all his subjects bow before him. After this spinning and bowing, they help the prince mount a horse and let him ride. There upon, they choke him with a silver scarf so that he barely stays alive. Then, they loosen their hold and hurriedly ask him ‘how many years will you be our Qagan?’ Since the Qagan is in a benumbed state, he cannot in any reasonable way state the duration of his rule. There upon, they conclude from his words, which he uttered in a muddled state the length of his office”.<sup>447</sup>

The Arab geographer Al-Istakhri ascribes almost the same ritual by the Khazars: “When they wish to appoint a qagan, they bring him and throttle him with a piece of silk till he is nearly strangled. Then they say to him, ‘How long do you wish to reign?’ He says ‘So and so many years.’ If he dies before then, well and good. If not, he is killed when he reaches the year in question.” Türks and Khazars were closely linked politically and linguistically, and the parallels between their rituals are not surprising.<sup>448</sup>

According to the Syriac chronicle written in the middle of the 12<sup>th</sup> century by Michael, Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch, the Türks elected their first ruler in a curious way. The Türks first invaded Persia in the second half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century - though Michael did not give a date - the Türks felt a need for a king. Therefore, each of their seventy tribes delegated one respected man to an assembly charged with finding a suitable ruler. They seated themselves in a circle with each man holding a stick in his hand. They drew a circle on the ground and agreed that each of them would throw his stick into the air and that he whose stick fell into the circle thus

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<sup>446</sup> DROMPP 1989: 93-94.

<sup>447</sup> GOLDEN 1982: 46; SINOR1997c: 246.

<sup>448</sup> SINOR 1994: 315.

drawn would become king. They acted accordingly, each of them throwing his stick as high up into the air as he could. Only one of these sticks fell down within the perimeter of the circle and stuck right into the middle of it. It belonged to a man from an insignificant tribe, and yet it was he who was recognized king of the Türks.<sup>449</sup>

Even when no miraculous qualities are ascribed to the ruler, the fact that he was elevated to or reached that position shows that he was favored, possibly selected by the Tengri, the supreme deity. The Orkhon Inscriptions strongly emphasize the role Tengri played in the choice of the qagan, and in guiding his actions. Many of these are performed “because Heaven so ordained.”<sup>450</sup>

As described in the sources, the process of electing the ruler reflects an archaic ceremonial. However, one wonders whether in the often bloody struggles for the throne such procedures were indeed followed.<sup>451</sup>

#### **1.4. Source of Qagan’s power**

The question then arises: What are the virtues and qualifications which would characterize a good, successful ruler? Wisdom and courage seem to have been the paramount virtues a ruler had a display. Those praised for their action in the Orkhon Inscriptions were said to be wise (*bilge*) and brave (*alp*), attributes normally associated anywhere, and at any time with the concept of a good ruler. More nebulous is the concept *qut*, always associated with a successful ruler.<sup>452</sup>

##### **1.4.1. Army**

The solidity and continuity of the Türk state had been achieved thanks to their organized and powerful armies. During the Türk period, the army played an important role in Türk society. The solidity and continuity of the Türk state were thanks to the organized and powerful armies. Qagan also took its power primarily from the military power of the army.

##### **1.4.2. Wisdom and courage**

The following statements used in the Chinese sources for Išbara the qagan of the Türk state, reveal the importance of courage of the ruler: “Išbara Qagan himself was very brave. Therefore, the peoples of Central Asia were gathered under his rule.” This statement shows that the Türk qagan was brave and it was an important feature to gather his people together.<sup>453</sup>

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<sup>449</sup> SINOR 1997c: 242, 243.

<sup>450</sup> SINOR 1997c: 249.

<sup>451</sup> SINOR 1994: 315.

<sup>452</sup> SINOR 1997c: 248, 249.

<sup>453</sup> ÖGEL 1988: 587

When talking about qagans in the Orkhon Inscriptions, it is pointed that how brave and wise they were: “Wise qagans were they, brave qagans were they.”<sup>454</sup>

### 1.4.3. Royal blood

One of the most basic conditions of being qagan was to have noble blood. Only noble descendants of A-shi-na could have been a qagan. As the father of the ruler, his mother also should have been from a royal family. For example, before his death, Ta-po Qagan appointed his brother Mukan’s son Da-luo-bian as qagan. But due to his mother was not a noble Türk he was not nominated as a qagan by the people.<sup>455</sup>

There are some examples of this situation. For example, the prince of Türk, A-shi-na Si-mo, could not become a qagan because his appearance resembled a Hu (Sogdian or barbarian).<sup>456</sup>

### 1.5. Qut

It was believed that the ruler of the people in Central Asian nomads had a divine source. Even though it was not effective in practice, it was one of the basic or even the most important conditions for the belief that the qagan was divined by the Tengri.

The concept of political authority or sovereignty was expressed with the word *qut* in the Türk’s administration. God gave the right to sovereignty, and the sovereign was entitled to rule from Tengri (sky). In other words, the ruler had the right to govern people because God willed, bestowed upon him *qut* (power of sovereignty), *ülüg* (destiny and fortune) and *yarlıg* (God's leave, fate). As can be understood, the Türk’s political power had a “charismatic sanctity” in its source.<sup>457</sup>

#### 1.5.1. Qut as fortune concept

Bombaci in his work points another meaning of *qut*. The successor of Kapgan, Bilge Qagan, in the Orkhon Inscriptions qualifies himself as *tängritäg, tängridä bolmıš* ‘alike to Heaven, born in Heaven’ and his son: *tängritäg tängri yaratmıš* ‘alike to Heaven, created by Heaven’. On the other hand, that there exists *qut* particular to qagan is stated in the Orkhon Inscriptions; this *qut* must be understood as ‘Royal Fortune’. In other words, in the formula *tängridä qut bulmıš* which would mean ‘who obtained Fortune from Heaven’, the aforesaid two notions are blended in the nature of the heavenly charisma of the Royal Fortune.<sup>458</sup>

<sup>454</sup> KT E-3; TEKİN 1968: 264.

<sup>455</sup> TAŞAĞIL 2003: 115.

<sup>456</sup> MAU-TSAI 2011: 283-284; TOGAN 2006: 193; TAŞAĞIL 2012: 77.

<sup>457</sup> KARAKAŞ 2009: 29.

<sup>458</sup> BOMBACI 1965: 287.

In the Orkhon Inscriptions, related to prince Kül Tegin, of 732 (I) and to the qagan Bilge Qagan, of 735 (II), the word *qut* occurs more than once, in a meaning variously understood by the interpreters, and which could be generally translated ‘fortune’, unless further information should be given on the value of this word.

On the other hand, the author proposes to translate jointly two terms *qut-ülüg* by ‘prosperous fortune’.

Lastly, Bombaci takes attention to another point as follows: In the inscription of Bilge Qagan the term *ïduqut*, that is *ïduq qut* ‘the holy fortune’, occurs as a title referred to the chief of the Basmils (II E 25). The adjective *ïduq* ‘holy’ certifies the sacral character of *qut* ‘fortune’. The abstract notion of ‘fortune’ is personified by a leader of a people, and in this concept, it can mean “royal fortune”.<sup>459</sup>

### 1.5.2. Qut as charisma concept

A certain part of the power institutionalization of the nomadic societies’ rulers has been played by sacred intermediaries to Heaven (Tengri), which would provide patronage and favor. It was considered that the prosperity and security of the society depended on the sacral capabilities of the ruler described above, his *charisma*, and his ability to secure the favor of Heaven and other supernatural forces.<sup>460</sup>

But how does the process of acquiring the status of charismatic leaders work? As we have seen, the intense warfare that precedes the creation of a nomadic empire evidently indicates something different from a peaceful election or consensual recognition. Everyone should submit to and support the leader once he has been “revealed” by God as a favorite through victory in battle. Legitimacy based on revelation through military exploits was accrued throughout the process of intra-nomadic warfare that always preceded the formation of a large union and continued once the newly built imperial formation confronted larger states. Defeat in battle, on the other hand, automatically increased internal tensions because the leader could no longer be seen as favored by Heaven and therefore his sovereignty and sacral power declined.<sup>461</sup>

In Inner Asian contexts the sovereign powers of the qagan, as they were more closely linked to his personal achievements, were subject to constant scrutiny and therefore required frequent confirmation. Several Inner Asian institutions, from the *comitatus* to the *qurultai* (political assembly) but also the royal hunt showed the importance of political participation of

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<sup>459</sup> BOMBACI 1965: 288-290.

<sup>460</sup> KRADIN 2015: 29.

<sup>461</sup> DI COSMO 2015: 66.

the upper elite in confirming or reconfirming the sovereign as the legitimate holder of the “mandate” to rule based on the notion that he enjoyed divine fortune.<sup>462</sup>

The autochthonous monuments the Orkhon Inscriptions that have reached us, can thus be seen as both political and religious documents because the chronicle of the feats of the kings is not just meant to establish memory and a political claim but to preserve the “revelation” of the good fortune of the king essential to the establishment of charisma and of the sovereign claim. The implication that these records carry, therefore, is to preserve and “store” the accumulated charisma for future generations.

In the case of the Xiongnu, the title itself of the first Chan-yu (king, emperor) indicates exactly the same concept: the sovereign was to enjoy his paramount position because he was “appointed” by Heaven.

The rituals, meetings, and other “ideological” forms that are normally understood as ways to make the power of the qagan “legitimate” were, in fact, ways to store and renew the charisma, to harness the fortune that the leader was supposed to have received by recognizing his role as the political and religious center of the community.<sup>463</sup>

Di Cosmo’s model also places emphasis on the role of a charismatic leader and the sacral investiture of the empire’s rulers. Although Bumin Qagan died soon after beginning his revolt against the Ruanruan, it is clear that he had really begun to rise to power more than a decade earlier. Bumin’s sudden death, followed quickly by that of his immediate successor, may have been mitigated somewhat by the presence of Bumin’s brother Ištemi, who was accorded essentially equal status in the 8<sup>th</sup> century Orkhon Inscriptions. More important than a single “charismatic leader” may have been the religious charisma that the ruling clan claimed for themselves. In the case of the Türks, this was derived from a divinely-bestowed power that was expressed in their well-known foundation myth along with rituals that reinforced their legitimacy and, it can be supposed, helped to unify the state around key religious ceremonies.<sup>464</sup>

The Old Turkic inscriptions are replete with references to numinous powers, particularly the supreme sky-god Tengri. Bilge Qagan was “godlike and divinely born” (Old Turkic *tengri teg tengri yaratmish*). His successes were brought about by Heaven’s will; he became qagan because Heaven ordered it and because of his own divine fortune or charisma

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<sup>462</sup> DI COSMO 2015: 66-67.

<sup>463</sup> DI COSMO 2015: 67.

<sup>464</sup> DROMPP 2005: 108.

(*qut*). Bilge invoked other supernatural powers as well: The Goddess Umay and the “sacred earth and water” (*idug yer sub*).<sup>465</sup>

### 1.5.3. Tian and Tengri

Although Heaven-mandated rule and worship of ancestors normally are considered hallmarks of Chinese culture, Turkic beliefs show some strong parallels. As in Confucian ideology, establishing claims to Turkic sacred legitimacy began with earthly accomplishments. The secular values that qagans ideally exemplified, bravery and wisdom, reflected the skills necessary to gain power in the nomadic realm. A qagan who created a new dynasty obviously had to be adroit at political networking and combat, but these talents also were requirements for his heirs who inevitably became involved in typical Turko-Mongol succession struggles. This explains why bravery and wisdom were the main kingship ideals that appear in indigenous inscriptions of the second Türk Qaganate.<sup>466</sup>

“Heavenly Qagan” was an innovative title that deviated from Confucian and Turkic firmly connected, yet managed to brilliantly create a bridge between the two cultures. Conventionally, a Chinese emperor was the Son of Heaven (Tian) and Turkic supreme qagan was Heaven (Tengri)-born or Heaven (Tengri)-conceived. The title Heavenly Qagan called attention to the fact that “Tian” and “Tengri” were not tribal or cultural gods, but merely different designations for the same supreme deity of Heaven. The Heavenly qagan also audaciously claimed not to be heaven’s junior kin on earth, which was the common position in both cultures but to be the earthly embodiment of Heaven. As such, he was the only legitimate supreme king on earth. To Turko-Mongol peoples who accepted Tang rule, the sacral aspect of the ideology bludgeoned them with the message that the *qut*, the heaven-endowed sacred charisma, had passed from their royal lineages to the Tang house of Li. The claim had real legitimacy because it was backed up by military victories on the battlefield.<sup>467</sup>

### 1.6. Roles of qagan

The ruler of the nomadic society should possess genuine talent as a military leader or organizer (to find gifted commanders) to lead nomads to success in the field of battle and then to provide his fellow-fighters with the riches of the settled people.<sup>468</sup>

In nomadic societies, the ruler had to balance the elite and ordinary nomads. It would be erroneous to consider a ruler as an autocrat, who independently made all of the important

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<sup>465</sup> DROMPP 2015: 441.

<sup>466</sup> MORI 1981: 47-50; SKAFF 2012: 111.

<sup>467</sup> SKAFF 2012: 122.

<sup>468</sup> KRADIN 2015: 30.

decisions. The leader's power lasted as long as different internal parties and major social groups believed that this leadership was advantageous for them. In the Turkish runic texts, benefits provided by the qagans for their people (*bodun*) are often described. Bilge Qagan always called into memory that he supplied the bare people with clothes and food. For the sake of the *bodun*, he and his brother Kül Tegin "did not idle by day and were not asleep by night". Tonyuquq, remindful of his acts, said "if a qagan of people was good-for-nothing this was a grief for people".<sup>469</sup> Qagan had basically 3 duties: political, military, and economic.

One of the most important tasks of the Türk qagan was to gather all the Turkic-speaking and other tribes under one state. This could only be done with force, that is, with the power of arms. With the political power he received from God, the Türk qagan subordinated the other nomadic tribes and put them all in order.

The duty of Türk qagans did not end with adding large lands to the country during their expeditions. The arrangement of these countries and the resettlement of the new people was a must. Thus, the development of the country was ensured by administration. All the administrators were also army commanders. The military state organization required administrators to be military commanders at the same time. It can be seen in the inscriptions of the Orkhon how the qagan and the statesmen put the people in order after expeditions and how they built a central state.

"Eastwards to the sunrise, southwards to the midday, westwards as far as the sunset, and northwards to the midnight all the peoples, I have organized thoroughly. These people are not rebellious now."<sup>470</sup>

"After they (Bumin and Ištemi) had become rulers, they organized and ruled the state and the institutions of the Turkish people."<sup>471</sup>

"After they had numbered seven hundred men, (my father, the qagan) organized and ordered the people who had lost their state and their qagan, the people who had turned slaves and servants, the people who had lost the Turkic institutions, in accordance with the rules of my ancestors. He (also organized there) the Töles and Tarduš peoples, and gave them a yabgu and šad."<sup>472</sup>

"After my uncle, the qagan, succeeded to the throne, he organized and nourished the Turkish people anew. He made poor rich and the few numerous."<sup>473</sup>

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<sup>469</sup> KRADIN 2015: 31.

<sup>470</sup> KT S 2-3; TEKİN 1968: 261.

<sup>471</sup> KT E 1; TEKİN 1968: 263.

<sup>472</sup> KT E 14; TEKİN 1968: 265.

<sup>473</sup> KT E 17; TEKİN 1968: 266.

“In order that Kögmen and land would not remain without a ruler, we organized the Az and Kirgiz peoples, and we came back and fought... Eastwards as far as beyond the Khingan mountains we thus settled and organized the people; westwards as far as Kengü Tarman we thus settled and organized the Turkish people...”<sup>474</sup>

### 1.6.1. Issuing the laws

Who was able to issue laws? This question cannot be answered without discussing the larger issue of the qagan’s sovereignty. Since the right to rule depended on personal charisma, sovereignty was not easily transacted from one qagan to the next, and succession presented complex challenges that threatened the stability of the empire. Certainly, there was no fixed value for “sovereignty” in the Inner Asian world. In an imperial setting, however, the powers ideally associated with sovereignty can be summarized in three points: the authority to issue laws, the authority to represent the whole political community in diplomatic and international relations, and the authority to raise taxes and draft soldiers.<sup>475</sup>

All laws concerning both public and private law were called *törü*. But they had never written it down. The arrangement of the laws of qagan is mentioned in the Orkhon Inscriptions as follows: “Wise qagans were they, brave qagans were they. Their buyruqs too, were wise and brave, indeed... Having kept the state under control, they arranged the laws (*törü*).”<sup>476</sup>

In order to prevent the conflict between personal rights and community and to maintain social order requires high administrative ability. Besides the courage and military competence of the qagan, he also needed to be foresighted. Where the *törü* was not fully implemented, the dissolution of the Türk province was possible.<sup>477</sup>

### 1.6.2. Army and expedition

Qagan was responsible for organizing expeditions by founding an army. The basis of the power of qagan was the army. The first step in establishing political power in the steppes of Central Asia is to conquer by building a powerful army. Turkic inscriptions tell us how the Türks formed an army, and that everyone was obeyed by making campaigns. Therefore, the qagan had the duty of being the head of the army and commanding the army. “My father, the Qagan, went off with seventeen men. Having heard the news that (Elterish) was marching off, those who were in the towns went up to the mountains and those who were on the mountains came down (from there), thus they gathered and numbered to seventy men. Because Tengri

<sup>474</sup> KT E 21-22; TEKİN 1968: 266-267.

<sup>475</sup> DI COSMO 2015: 65-66.

<sup>476</sup> KT E 3-4; TEKİN 1968: 264.

<sup>477</sup> DURMUŞ 2008: 64.



granted strength, the soldiers of my father, the Qagan, were like wolves, and his enemies were like sheep. Having gone on campaigns forward and backward, they gathered together and he collected men; they all numbered seven hundred men. After they had numbered seven hundred men, (my father, the Qagan,) organized and ordered the people who had lost their state and their Qagan.”<sup>478</sup>

In the Turkic states, the qagan had some duties and responsibilities. The most important of these is to enrich the state and the people and to meet the needs of the people. For this, he had to work day and night, had to send the army, and go on a campaign. Thus, the welfare of the people would be ensured.

More broadly, chiefs portrayed themselves as generous to all of their subjects. The eighth-century Türk leader, Bilge Qagan, used the inscription to promote himself as a provider for his people. “In order to nourish the people, I, with great armies, went on campaign twelve times...I furnished the naked people with clothes and I made the poor people rich”.<sup>479</sup> In a patrimonial manner, Bilge Qagan depicts his realm as a household where he feeds and clothes his subjects, as a father would provide for his children, so they might prosper.<sup>480</sup>

Again, in the Kül Tegin inscription, how the qagan brings people to prosperity is written. “After my uncle, the qagan succeeded to the throne, he organized and nourished the Türk people anew. He made the poor rich and the few numerous.”<sup>481</sup>

The Turkic words *ülüg* or *üleš* (as a verb) mean to share or divide something. Qagan used to distribute some or all of the booty from the expeditions to his people.<sup>482</sup>

The legitimacy of a qagan mainly depends on two factors: his adherence to a tribe with the charisma of sovereignty and his personal success in “caring for” his people. In the elite context, this means the accumulation and distribution of prestigious goods. An ideal ruler is a successful conqueror who possesses great wealth and then generously distributes it among his followers. For this reason, a Chinese ambassador who lived in the East Turkic settlements for many years makes a statement about the traditions of the Türks: “It is a tradition among the Türks that all the spoils, whether human beings or property, belong to the subjects and that qagan does not receive anything.”<sup>483</sup>

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<sup>478</sup> KT E 12-13; TEKİN 1968: 265.

<sup>479</sup> TEKİN 1968: 268.

<sup>480</sup> SKAFF 2012: 80.

<sup>481</sup> KT E 17; TEKİN 1968: 266.

<sup>482</sup> CLAUSON 1972: 142, 154: *ülüg*: ‘share, part, in the sense of one of several equal shares or parts.’ *üleš*: ‘properly of several people to divide something equally among themselves, but sometimes more vaguely to divide something up.’

<sup>483</sup> STARK 2010: 54.

### 1.7. Dethronement

The qagan was an autocrat and sole intermediary between the sedentary empire (China, Byzantium) and the el, both as a negotiator (peace, money, trade) and a war leader. But in the internal affairs, his power was limited by the charismatic clans and the indigenous tribal leaders.<sup>484</sup>

If a ruler failed to fulfill his sacral functions and the steppe was haunted by epidemics, epizootics, and major losses of livestock through disease, the unlucky leader of the steppe polity could be replaced or even killed.<sup>485</sup>

In the Türk Qaganate, Tong Yabgu Qagan was hated and abandoned by his people because he treated the people badly. Again, the mismanagement of Xieli Qagan and his hard attitude towards the people of Kapgan Qagan caused the rebellion and it ended up death of the mentioned qagans.<sup>486</sup>

Information provided by al-Masudi, a Muslim geographer, shows that in case of blatant incompetence, as manifested by calamities befalling the country, the qagan will be put to death. The Khazars were closely linked with the Türk Empire, so it is not surprising to find parallels between the rituals of the two peoples.<sup>487</sup>

## 2. QATUN

As for the qagan the title *qatun* is also originated Yeniseian by Vovin. According to him *qa-* means ‘great’ in Yeniseian language, *-tu-* must have been a Ruanruan creation for feminizing suffix, and *-n* is a singular suffix from Mongolic.<sup>488</sup>

The title *qatun* appears in the Old Turkic inscriptions which contain as many as seven references to the ruler’s wife. In the Kül Tegin inscription, the narrator speaks of his indebtedness to the *qatun*, his goddess, Umay-like<sup>489</sup> mother. More importantly, the text attributes the re-establishment of the Türk Qaganate to the heavenly powers who elevated his father Elterish and his mother, Ilbilge. Thus, father and mother the ruler and consort, are jointly mentioned as apparent equals.<sup>490</sup>

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<sup>484</sup> PRITSACK 1988: 754-755.

<sup>485</sup> KRADIN 2015: 30.; BAYKARA 2001: 164.

<sup>486</sup> CHAVANNES 2013: 54; MAU-TSAI 2011: 191, 195, 451.

<sup>487</sup> SINOR 1997c: 246.

<sup>488</sup> VOVIN 2007: 184.

<sup>489</sup> Clauson gives the following definition of umay: “Originally, placenta, afterbirth: also used as the name of the (only?) Turkish goddess, whose particular function was to look after women and children, possibly because this object was supposed to have magic qualities.” (CLAUSON 1972: 164.)

<sup>490</sup> SINOR 2007: 262.

The *qatun*, in the Turkic inscriptions, is pointed as a holy figure just as the qagan. The name Umay appears in the Kül Tegin inscriptions (E 31): *Umay tag ögüm qatun qutunga inim Kül Tegin ar at bultı*. Clauson renders the sentence with “under the auspices of my mother who is like (the goddess) Umay”.<sup>491</sup> Tekin translates: “my younger brother Prince Kül got (his) adult name, by the good luck of my Umay-like mother, the *qatun*.”<sup>492</sup> On the other hand, Sinor translates: “my younger brother Kül Tegin attained manhood by the royal favor of my Umay-like mother”. Because of the care lavished on her children, the Qatun deserved to be compared to Umay, their principal protector.<sup>493</sup>

Qatuns also affect the state administration. It was stated in the inscriptions that *qatun* was enthroned for the administration of the people having sanctity by God. They were sitting on the throne with the *törü* as the qagans and governed the state with the qagan: “In order that the Türk people would not go to ruin and in order that it would be an (independent) people again, they held my father, Elterish Qagan, and my mother, Ilbilge Qatun, at the top of heaven and raised them upwards.”<sup>494</sup>

In October 623, Qagan besieged the Chinese city of Mai, but later changed his mind and wanted to return. According to Chinese sources, he continued to besiege the city by giving up his idea of his wife’s insistence.<sup>495</sup>

We know that the *qatuns* joined the state delegation in international relations. In 725, Bilge Qagan’s wife, Po-fu Qatun, was among the delegation that welcomed the ambassador from China.<sup>496</sup>

After the death of Bilge Qagan, his younger son, Tengri Tegin, ascended the throne. Because the new qagan’s age was very young, his mother Po-fu Qatun the daughter of Tonyuquq undertook state administration. Po-fu Qatun, who tried to strengthen his position by cooperating with some statesmen, wanted to eliminate the left and right šads who were uncles of the young qagan. Qatun, who managed to kill the western wing šad and connect his people and soldiers to her, prepared to march against the left-wing šad. But he pretended earlier and killed the Tengri Qagan. Thus, the reign of Po-fu Qatun ended. Soon after, Basmil, Qarluq, and Uygurs rebelled and put an end to the Türk state.<sup>497</sup>

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<sup>491</sup> CLAUSON 1972: 165.

<sup>492</sup> TEKİN 1968: 268.

<sup>493</sup> SINOR 1984: 1772.

<sup>494</sup> KT E-11; TEKİN 1968: 265.

<sup>495</sup> TELLİOĞLU 2016: 218.

<sup>496</sup> GÖMEÇ 1997: 90.

<sup>497</sup> TAŞAĞIL 2004: 56-58.

The Uyğur borrowed many imperial trappings from the Türks, including many of their official titles, but this seems to be the only evidence that would imply that Uyğur qagans imitated, at least in part, the enthronement rituals of the Türk rulers.<sup>498</sup>

The Tang imperial princess, daughter of Xianzong, Taihe married to Uyğur Qagan, Kül Tengride Qut Bolmış Alp Bilge Qagan in 821. The Taihe Princess was seated on a small throne on a sedan-chair. “A minister of each of nine clans of Uyğurs carried the sedan-chair and they followed the sun, turning to the right around the court nine times.” This presents us with a surprising parallel to the enthronement of the qagans of the Türks. The fact that the Taihe Princess underwent a ritual similar to a Türk qagan’s enthronement suggests that Uyğur qagans must have participated in similar enthronement rituals and that they had retained this practice from the Türks. After the ritual nine turns, the princess got down from the sedan-chair and ascended the tower to join the qagan. She was now formally regarded as *qatun* and received the obeisance of Uyğur officials whenever they were in her presence. She had her own residence/camp, separate from the qagan’s.<sup>499</sup>

We can observe the political role of the *qatuns* among the Khazars too. When the ruler of Khazars died in the 730-731s, his mother, Bars Bike, took over the country.<sup>500</sup>

The word *qatun*, which is mentioned in five different lines of four Yenisei inscriptions, does not bear the meanings of ‘wife, the wife of the qagan’ or ‘woman’. It is obvious that as a result of the fact that the Türks treated rivers with respect, the name of the River Qatun (in Russian Qatunya), being one of the important rivers of the South Yenisei region, is mentioned in five different lines.<sup>501</sup>

The position of *qatuns* in society was reflected by their cities. In the city of Etil, the capital of the Khazars, the part where the *qatun* dwelled was recorded as Qatunbalig. It was known that there were four *qatun* cities in the Uyğurs era too.<sup>502</sup>

### 3. HIGH-RANK TITLES

**1 Yabgu:** It is the highest administrative rank after the qagan. The chapter on Western Türks by Zhou-shu, Sui-shu, and Jiu Tang-shu all consider it the second most important rank after the qagan.<sup>503</sup> The title *yabgu* appears to have had special significance for the Western Türks

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<sup>498</sup> DROMPP 2007: 57-60.

<sup>499</sup> GÖMEÇ 1997: 89; DROMPP 2007: 57-60.

<sup>500</sup> GÖMEÇ 2018: 50.

<sup>501</sup> AYDIN 2011: 255.

<sup>502</sup> TELLİOĞLU 2016: 216.

<sup>503</sup> DOBROVITS 2004: 182.

whose rulers bore it as both name and a title. In the Türk hierarchy, the *yabgu* was much like the *šad*, though his duties are not as well defined in the sources. But we know that both of them administered larger parts of the empire and tribes. In general, the *yabgu* led a separate tribe or part of the state. The title was usually kept within the royal Türk clan, A-shi-na but was, on occasion, granted to non-royal members, generally rulers of areas subjugated by the Türks.<sup>504</sup> It is understood that *yabgu* is actually a title that comes after the qagan and is an important part of the state and is carried by the person responsible for administration and member of the ruler family.<sup>505</sup>

Thus, the leader of the Türks (535), the father of Bumin and Ištemi, the founders of the Türk Qaganate, had the title *da she-hu*, or *da ye-hu*, i.e. “Great Yabgu”.<sup>506</sup> In addition, their ancestors A-xian and Na-du-lu are mentioned in Chinese chronicles under the title *šad*. These facts suggest that the governmental system of the Ruanruan state also used the titles of *yabyu* and *šad*.<sup>507</sup>

The information about this title is connected with the Western Türks as it was used more by the Turkic tribes in the west. The Chinese sources use the term *ye-hu Tujue* (Yabgu Türks) for the Western Türks. In addition, Tokharistan was ruled by a Türk descendant of A-shi-na. In fact, according to Chinese sources, it is highly probable that the title *yabgu* was used by all Western Türk princes.<sup>508</sup> The brother of Bumin Qagan and the deputy chief in the establishment of the qaganate were entitled Ištemi Yabgu. Another famous *yabgu* was Tong Yabgu.<sup>509</sup>

According to Kashgari, he was one of the people in the Karakhanids two degrees below the sultan.<sup>510</sup> This title is also given to the rulers of small states. The rulers of Oguz and Qarluq were called Yabgu.<sup>511</sup> Yabgu’s loyalty to the qagan was legal and political, but they could decide to make war or peace themselves.

There are different opinions about the etymology of *yabgu*. In Babayarov’s opinion, the most appropriate is the one according to which the title of *Chan-yu* can be reconstructed as *yabyu*.<sup>512</sup> According to names like Golden, Giraud, Altheim, Grousset, and Frye, this title is of Iranian origin and was later adopted into Turkic. According to these names, the original word

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<sup>504</sup> GOLDEN 1980: 190.

<sup>505</sup> DOERFER 1965: 396.

<sup>506</sup> DONUK 1988: 56.

<sup>507</sup> BABAYAROV 2013: 161.

<sup>508</sup> CHAVANNES 2013: 138, 211.

<sup>509</sup> GÖMEÇ 2002: 945.

<sup>510</sup> KASHGARI 1985: 225.

<sup>511</sup> ORKUN 1946: 140.

<sup>512</sup> BABAYAROV 2013: 155.

Yabgu should be as *ya-ba-gu* meaning “lord of the bow”.<sup>513</sup> On the other hand, first proposed by Thomsen, and later accepted by De Groot, Chavannes, O. Franke, Gy. Németh, Moravcsik it is a Turkic title that derives from the verb *yap-* and has the *-gu* suffix.<sup>514</sup>

**2 Šad:** According to Chinese lists of Turkic titles was the most important after Qagan and Yabgu in the Türk Qaganate.<sup>515</sup> The Orkhon Inscriptions emphasized that when Elterish Qagan ascended the throne in 682, organized the groups Töles and Tarduš, and appointed them yabgu and šad. Thus, without yabgu and šad, the state of the Türks wouldn’t have existed.<sup>516</sup> Among the Türks, the title *šad* appears, in the Chinese sources, before the foundation in 552. The Türk ruler Bumin’s great grandfather was called Nuo-du-lu Šad and the grandfather A-xian Šad, who, however, appeared to be mythical personages.<sup>517</sup> In the Turkic inscriptions, Šad, often referred to as one of the greatest titles after yabgu. There were two šads in the Türk State, eastern and western.<sup>518</sup>

In the Türk Qaganate, the title šad was conferred on sons and brothers of the Qagan apparently with military functions.<sup>519</sup> The šads were headed by an independent army and were responsible for the administration of certain regions. Šad took 3<sup>rd</sup> place in the state hierarchy after qagan and yabgu.

But it is seen that šad came as the second title after qagan in the hierarchical strata in the second Türk Qaganate time. As a matter of fact, Bilge Qagan first carried the title of šad, and after he became a qagan, he appointed two šads after enthroned.<sup>520</sup> The conclusion that can be reached here is that if there is a western branch of the state, yabgu was assigned as a kind of ruler of the west wing of the state. If there was no yabgu, the rank after the qagan in the center was šad. Šads could have reached to qagan or yabgu positions.

**3 Tegin:** Tegin means prince and it was the title given to the sons of qagan and his brothers. They were the legal heirs of the throne. According to Jiu Tang-shu, tegins who had their army bore the title of šad.<sup>521</sup> The existence of the title *tegin* dates back to the Xiongnu period. The “Han Shu” also mentions the presence of usage by the Xiongnus of the title *tu-qi* belonged to left and right *xian wang*. This title is traditionally interpreted as Old- Turkic *tegin*

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<sup>513</sup> GIRAUD 1999: 112-113; GOLDEN 2006; GOLDEN 2007: 172.

<sup>514</sup> DONUK 1988: 62.

<sup>515</sup> BOMBACI 1974a: 167.

<sup>516</sup> DOBROVITS 2004: 183.

<sup>517</sup> MAU-TSAI 2011: 203; BOMBACI 1974a: 177

<sup>518</sup> The sons and brothers of the Tujue were called Te-le (Tegin). It was called šad commanding an army alone (MAU-TSAI 2011: 20)

<sup>519</sup> DOERFER 1965: 396; BOMBACI 1974a: 177.

<sup>520</sup> DONUK 1988: 33-34; GÖMEÇ 2000: 942

<sup>521</sup> DOBROVITS 2004: 180.

‘prince’.<sup>522</sup> Around the same time (the Tuyuhun’s period) the Chinese chronicles mention the tribe To-ba (Tabgach) and the founded by them the dynasty To-ba Wei (5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> centuries), the title *tegin* was recorded in the form of *zhi-qin*.<sup>523</sup> There are many titles of tegin in the Turkic inscriptions.<sup>524</sup>

The most famous princes were Kül Tegin, the brother of the Bilge Qagan, and Yollug Tegin, from the ruling family and the author of the inscriptions in the second Türk Qaganate period. As evidenced by the historical documents, when the tegins were assigned to the administration of a region at the head of the army, they were granted the title of yabgu or šad. Tegins had a rank below qagan and yabgu, the main rulers of the state, but they were in higher rank than šads.<sup>525</sup>

It is necessary to open a separate parenthesis for Kül Tegin. Because, during the Second Türk Qaganate period, together with his brother Bumin Qagan, they ruled the state in synchrony. Even though we had only one example, sometimes tegins also had authority as much as qagan.<sup>526</sup>

**4 Küli/Külüg Čor:** Küli Čor was one of the highest administrative and more dominantly military title.<sup>527</sup> They had an army under their command. And they could decide to go for expeditions by themselves. We can even see some examples that Küli Čor led a tribe.

Külüg means famous, glorious. At the same time, it was a military and administrative title.<sup>528</sup> On the other hand, *čor* is a military title that was given even to some qagans. Kapgan Qagan, was named Mochuo in Chinese sources. It is referred to as Böğü Čor in Turkic. Moyen Čor, one of the Uygurs Qagans, also carried this title.<sup>529</sup>

Besides the Küli Čor there is Kül İč Čor title too. It is a military and administrative title. There were Küli Čor or Apa Tarqan who were experienced and senior commanders leading the army even sometimes above the commanders such as šads. Some of them were members of the ruling family, but it was not necessarily needed to be a member of the royal family to get the title.<sup>530</sup>

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<sup>522</sup> BABAYAROV 2013: 157.

<sup>523</sup> BABAYAROV 2013: 159.

<sup>524</sup> İl Čor Tegin (Küli Čor Ins.), (KT BQ Ins.), Ozmiş Tegin (Šine-Ussu, BQ Ins.), Tonga Tegin (KT BQ Ins.), Yollug Tegin (KT BQ Ins.); GÖMEÇ 2000: 943.

<sup>525</sup> DONUK 1988: 48.

<sup>526</sup> DOERFER 1965: 395-396.

<sup>527</sup> DOBROVITS 2004: 181.

<sup>528</sup> TEKİN 1968: 354; CLAUSON 1972: 717; GÖMEÇ 2000: 940.

<sup>529</sup> Tadıg Čor, Tarduš İnanču Čor (KT); DONUK 1988: 14; GÖMEÇ 2000: 935.

<sup>530</sup> DOERFER 1965: 396; İšbara Bilge Küli Čor (Küli Čor Ins.), Küli Čor (BQ); GÖMEÇ 2000: 939.

The direct control of the Tarduš group was, according to the Orkhon Inscriptions, exercised by the official external Küli Čor. There is also an inscription in honor of the Küli Čor in Turkic runic inscriptions. This is the subtitle of Küli Čor mentioned in our sources. It is also clear from the text that the Küli Čor was the ruler of the Tarduš people.<sup>531</sup>

**5 Apa:** Apa, which is referred to as kinship in Old Turkic, also refers to ‘greatness, old age’. It takes place in both military and administrative titles. In the Chinese source, it is Tonyuquq’s title (Apa Tarqan) and it means chief commander. It is also one of the titles of Kül Tegin.<sup>532</sup> According to the Orkhon Inscriptions, over the army in the eastern part of the empire, there was an Apa Tarqan.<sup>533</sup>

**6 Elteber:** It is an administrative title and has the same meaning as *elteriř*. It means having the administration, the state, and the people.<sup>534</sup>

According to the Bombaci, many scientists have identified the word as *qi-li-fa* or *xie-li-fa* in Chinese sources. He says *qi-li-fa* is the more ancient form of Elteber. It is only one to be used until the Tang period. On the other hand, *xie-li-fa* was used mostly in the Sui period.<sup>535</sup> According to Bombaci *Qi-li-fa* and *Xie-li-fa* indicate the same categories of persons, that is vassal kings of Central Asia and chiefs of the Tiele (Töles) tribal groups in general and of the Uygurs in particular, and also of other tribal groups.<sup>536</sup>

Elteber appears first in Turkic texts in the Orkhon Inscriptions of the years 732 and 735. Three peoples are mentioned under the rule of an Elteber. One of them is the Az, whose Elteber was defeated by Kül Tegin in the year 715. Then the Uygurs; their Elteber was defeated by Bilge Qagan in the year 717. A reference to the Elteber of the third people, apparently the Qarluks were defeated about 720.<sup>537</sup>

Eltebers were the large class of indigenous tribal leaders as well as the subordinated rulers and cities. They retained their autonomy at the local level. The important subordinated rulers received high Turkic titles, in the first place *elteber* and *erkin*.<sup>538</sup>

The position of Elteber may be established on the basis of the Chinese lists, which follow hierarchical order. In the lists of Sui period, Elteber follows Yabgu, Šad, Tegin and

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<sup>531</sup> DOBROVITS 2004: 157; AYDIN 2014: 31-41.

<sup>532</sup> ‘A-po ta-kan’: MAU-TSAI II, Index; GÖMEÇ 2000: 930.

<sup>533</sup> BQ S 12.

<sup>534</sup> Toygun İlteber (KT), Uygur Elteber (BQ); DONUK 1988: 22; GÖMEÇ 2000: 937.

<sup>535</sup> BOMBACI 1966b: 33-34.

<sup>536</sup> BOMBACI 1966b: 33.

<sup>537</sup> BOMBACI 1966b: 24.

<sup>538</sup> PRITSAK 1988: 775.



precedes Tudun. In the more ancient lists of the Tang Period, Elteber follows Tegin, Šad, Külüg Čor, and Apa and precedes Tudun and Erkin.<sup>539</sup>

In the historical sources, *elteber* is mainly chief of a tribal group (*bodun*), including in general several hundred thousand people and having considerable political weight. To have an *elteber* as a chief was a qualification for a tribal group. This appears from the expression *elteberlig bodun*, a tribal group ruled by an Elteber.<sup>540</sup> Even the title of *elteber* was used by the kings of Central Asia such as Gaochang (Turfan) and Kucha, when they were no longer subject to the Türk Qaganate.<sup>541</sup>

**7 Tudun (tu-tung):** According to Ecsedy the title was loaned from Chinese. This title appears first in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, but in the Tang- time it was established only in the first year of the Qien-yuan period (759); its complete form is *zhao-tao-tu-tong*. The *tu-tung* is the military leader of the frontier provinces, he takes care of the army, but he is a subordinate of the *jie-du-shi* of full power.<sup>542</sup>

Chinese sources inform us that *tudun* was a hereditary title given to officers of the government of the Türks who was not of royal blood. Their function was to supervise the administration of conquered lands that were left under the nominal rule of their native kings. One of the Tudun's primary concerns was the control of customs duties and taxes.<sup>543</sup>

As a matter of fact, in addition to the *eltebers* appointed by the Western Qagan, Tong Yabgu to various western regions, there was also the title of *tudun* that was appointed for overseeing, administrative duties and controlling taxes.<sup>544</sup>

**8 Erkin-Irkin:** It is an administrative title, and usually the leaders of the tribes had such title. The title was used by tribal chiefs, superior to beg. The word often occurs in Chinese records transcribed *i-kin*.<sup>545</sup>

For example, the Nu-shi-bi's, which constitute the five tribes of the On Oq in the west, had an *erkin* leading each tribe. At the beginning of the 7<sup>th</sup> century, the Uyгур tribe was ruled by an *erkin*. And the Erkin Pu-sa in 628 received the title *elteber* for defeating Il Qagan's son. This shows that the title of *erkin* is a lower degree than *elteber*.<sup>546</sup>

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<sup>539</sup> BOMBACI 1966b: 52-53.

<sup>540</sup> BOMBACI 1966b: 55.

<sup>541</sup> BOMBACI 1966b: 58.

<sup>542</sup> ECSEDY 1965: 89.

<sup>543</sup> Tudun Yamtar (BQ Ins.), Tekiş Kül Tudun (Küli Čor Ins.), Urungu Tudun Cigši (Miran Texts); GOLDEN 1980: 216; GÖMEÇ 2000: 944

<sup>544</sup> CHAVANNES 1903: 201, 24, 52; DONUK 1988: 53.

<sup>545</sup> CLAUSON 1972: 225.

<sup>546</sup> Sebig Kül Erkin (BQ Ins.), Ulug Erkin (KT Ins.); GÖMEÇ 2000: 935.

**9 Šadapit:** It may be the plural of the title *šad*.<sup>547</sup> According to Clauson, *šadapit* perhaps meaning the entourage of the *šad* or the like.<sup>548</sup>

The second level comprised the twenty-eight hereditary *šadapit*, called by the Chinese traditionally Da-chen, a steppe institution known from the Xiongnu times. They were members of the dynasty and of the brothers-in-law tribes. Each of them commanded at least one *tümen* (ten thousand horsemen) during wartime. The *šadapit* (sg. *Šad-apa*) were Governors-General at large. They controlled larger submitted polities but had also the central internal problems of the empire under their responsibility. They were helped in those matters by the ranking ministers called *tarqat* (sg. *tarqan*) and by bureaucrats of Chinese origin; the latter were either kidnapped or were hired defectors.<sup>549</sup>

As in the passage quoted from the Kül Tegin inscription<sup>550</sup> the *Šadapits* are mentioned as the first one should presume that they were superior in rank to the *Tarqans* and the *Buyruqs*.<sup>551</sup> What may be gained from the Orkhon Inscriptions is that the *Šadapits* were not only, as it appears from the first passage, in the retinue of the *Qagans*, but also belonged to the retinue of the chiefs of tribal groups, as the *Tarduš* and the *Töles*. The subordinate character of the *Šadapits* would explain the fact that they are not mentioned in the Chinese lists of *Tujue* officers, which are limited to the higher ranks.<sup>552</sup>

**10 Tarqan:** It is a high-level title with both military and administrative duties. It should be noted that the *Tarqans* are not members of the royal family.<sup>553</sup> *Tarqans* were the civil governors, responsible for justice and fiscal matters.<sup>554</sup>

Some authorities claim that this title dates back to the *Chan-yu* title of the Xiongnu. Like some titles its plural version is *tarqat*. According to Vovin, it is quite apparent, due to its Mongolic plural form *tarqa-t*, that the *Türks* borrowed this term from *Xianbei*, probably via *Ruanruan*. Additionally, -n in Old Turkic *tarqan* is a suffix of Mongolic origin.<sup>555</sup> In early Mongol empire times, *tarqan* became a person exempt from ordinary taxation and later merely artisan or craftsman. Also, he could attend to Mongol court without special permission, and he could commit up to nine offenses without being called to account.

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<sup>547</sup> *Šadapit Begler* (KT Ins., BQ Ins.); GÖMEÇ 2000: 942.

<sup>548</sup> CLAUSON 1972: 867; DONUK 1988: 35.

<sup>549</sup> PRITSAK 1988: 774.

<sup>550</sup> KT S-1-2.

<sup>551</sup> BOMBACI 1974b: 39.

<sup>552</sup> BOMBACI 1974b: 39.

<sup>553</sup> *Apa Tarqan* (KT Ins.), *Bilge Qutlug Tarqan Sengun* (Terhin Ins.), *İnancu Apa Yargan Tarqan* (KT Ins.) *Oğul Tarqan* (KT Ins.); DONUK 1988: 41; GÖMEÇ 2000: 942.

<sup>554</sup> PRITSAK 1988: 775.

<sup>555</sup> VOVIN 2007: 182.

Some obsolete titles also appear in the titles of *tarqans*, such as *taman tarqan*, *apa tarqan* and *inanču apa yargan tarqan*. As far as the title holders are concerned, we know from the description of the Menander, and we have already quoted that the son of Maniakh, the leader of the first Türk embassy sent to Constantinople, 568, probably had the title *taɣma tarqan*. As for the title *tarqan*, we should mention the commander-in-chief of the full force *apa tarqan* and the death title of *Kül tegin inanču apa yargan tarqan* (KT W2). From all this information, it becomes clear that the title *tarqan* must have been a high-ranking court official. From the plural forms of the Orkhon Inscriptions (*tarqat buyruq bağlär*), it can be inferred that we have to count not with one official, but with several *tarqan* titles. However, the exact status and scope of this layer are unknown.<sup>556</sup> Additionally, the title *tarqan* sometimes was not used by means of nobility, it was an honorary title in some cases.<sup>557</sup>

**11 Buyruq:** The word derives from the verb “to command”. It is an administrative title. Additionally, in the Orkhon Inscriptions, it is mentioned about *ič buyruq* means “inner commander/minister”.<sup>558</sup> This word was later passed in Hungarian as “bíró”.<sup>559</sup> *buyruq* was the collective name for the higher officials.

According to Doerfer, *buyruq* is not a group, but a particular official title. *Buyruq*’s subordinates were under the title of *ügä*. The *buyruq* itself was a beg in a wider sense. And Doerfer adds that this title would designate the leader of the tribes and an official title at the same time.<sup>560</sup>

It is a generic term for all persons commanded by *qagan* to perform specific duties, civil or military. *Ulayı buyruq* means all the officers. On the other hand, there was a title *ič buyruq* meant domestic officer.<sup>561</sup>

It follows that the power and social status of the *buyruq* were directly dependent on its place in the *qagan* environment. Following the words used in the inscriptions, they existed as members of the *qagan* (empire) and not of the traditional *bodun*.<sup>562</sup>

**12 Tutuq:** The phonetic form of the title would suggest that it is the oldest borrowing, for among the Turkic transcriptions this is the only word preserving the guttural implosive of the ending of Ancient Chinese words in a form *-k*. The title *tutuq* goes along back in Chinese

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<sup>556</sup> DOBROVITS 2004: 54-55.

<sup>557</sup> DOERFER 1965: 400.

<sup>558</sup> GÖMEÇ 1997: 108; DONUK 1988: 11-12; CLAUSON 1972: 387.

<sup>559</sup> GYÖRFFY 1960: 171; DONUK 1988: 12.

<sup>560</sup> DOERFER 1965: 363-365.

<sup>561</sup> CLAUSON 1972: 387.

<sup>562</sup> DOBROVITS 2004: 51

history.<sup>563</sup> This official rank meant a control over the military affairs of one or more provinces. The title *tutuq* had been borrowed by any means before 558, probably prior to the beginning of the Türk independence, and perhaps it had not been borrowed by the Turkic founders of the new empire, but by their predecessors, the Ruanruan.<sup>564</sup>

Speculation about the origin of *tutuq* began as soon as the title was encountered in the Orkhon Inscriptions. On the authority of scholars as eminent as those just cited, the Chinese origin *tutuq* gained general acceptance and has been repeated in works of general interest, such as Grousset, and accepted by Turcologists such as Rasanen, and Clauson, who vocalizes *totok*.<sup>565</sup> The Chinese title *tu-tu* “probably originated in Later Han possibly as early as the first Later Han reign, designating a man given overall command of the empire’s military forces.” In Tang times, the principal meaning was “supervisor in chief”.<sup>566</sup> According to Gömeç it means “military governor”. Its signification in Türk Qaganate is ‘governor of a province, leader of high rank’.<sup>567</sup> Doerfer says that in China this title was the title of the military governors. But for the Türks, they administered smaller units. And they had lesser autonomy compare to the *eltebers*.<sup>568</sup>

Below many examples can be seen from the Turkic inscriptions:

Tutuq Başı (Šine-Usu Ins.)

Tutuq Beg (Kemcık-Kaya Başı Ins.)

Alp Urungu Tutuq (Cakul IV Ins.)

Atcı Alp Tutuq (Abakan Ins.)

Az Tutuq (Kül Tegin Ins.)

Bilge Tay Sengun Tutuq (Terhin Ins.)

Cigil Tutuq (Šine-Usu Ins.)

El Togan Tutuq (Uyuk-Tarlak Ins.)

Kulug Tutuq (Barlık II Ins.)

Kunc Tutuq (Tuba I Ins.)

Ong Tutuq (KT Ins., BQ Ins.)

Oyune Tutuq (Tele Ins.)

Oz Apa Tutuq (Cigši Bagatur Ins.)

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<sup>563</sup> ECSEDY 1965: 84.

<sup>564</sup> ECSEDY 1965: 85.

<sup>565</sup> GROUSSET 1939: 265; RASANEN 1969: 502; CLAUSON 1972: 453.

<sup>566</sup> SINOR 1990: 145.

<sup>567</sup> ECSEDY 1965: 85.

<sup>568</sup> DOERFER 1965: 397.

Yabaš Tutuq (Cigši Bagatur Ins.)<sup>569</sup>

**13 Beg (bäg):** It is both an administrative and a military title. “beg” is the title of the chiefs leading the tribes. It is in charge of maintaining internal solidarity and regulating military, financial affairs, and justice. Beks used to act as a bridge between qagan and the people.

Some experts claim that the title is Old-Iranian origin. Doerfer claims that the different forms *baya* and *beg* may be explained by the fact that the Old-Iranian has two forms *baya* and *baga*, both meaning ‘God’. Later the word was also used as a title for the king. Even the use of the title appears as ‘prince’ in the Orkhon Inscriptions of the Türks.<sup>570</sup>

Some sentences in the inscriptions explain that the state was strong when the beg and the people were together and that when the beg and the people separated, the state weakened or even collapsed.<sup>571</sup> In the Orkhon Inscriptions, the beks played an important role in the state's salvation “Both the beks and peoples were peaceable. For this reason, they were able to keep the state under control.”<sup>572</sup>

In the broader sense, *beg* was a general title for all aristocratic leaders in the state system. Turkic nobility was divided into three categories: *šadapit*, *tarqan*, and *buyruq*, the common name of which was the beg (bäg).<sup>573</sup> This title was used as a general title covering all the rulers of the state, in the sense of “lord” except for qagan.<sup>574</sup> It is seen in the Orkhon Inscriptions that rulers of the other nomadic tribes were also addressed as beks in a broader picture.<sup>575</sup> On the other hand, sometimes we see this title as a personal title in the inscriptions.<sup>576</sup>

After describing the most important titles representing the highest level of the state other titles military, administrative titles, and adjective titles will be mentioned below.

#### 4. MILITARY TITLES

**1 Alp:** Alp basically ‘tough, resistant, hard to overcome’; originally applicable to a person when the conventional translation ‘brave’ is reasonably accurate. Besides its adjectival use, it was used as ‘warrior’ too. The Külü Čor inscription contains the following phrase: *alpi*

<sup>569</sup> GÖMEÇ 2000: 944.

<sup>570</sup> DOERFER 1965: 403.

<sup>571</sup> BQ E 3; DONUK 1988: 6.

<sup>572</sup> KT E 3; TEKİN 1968: 264.

<sup>573</sup> DOBROVITS 2004: 49.

<sup>574</sup> “Hear my words from the beginning to the end, first of all you, my younger brothers and my sons, and my folks and relatives, you šadapit beks (lords) to the South, tarqans and buyruq beks to the North,...and you Toquz Oguz beks and people!” (KT S 1-2; TEKİN 1968: 261).

<sup>575</sup> “Oguz Begleri” KT E 23, “Türk Begleri” KT E-34, BQ E 2, “Tarduš Begleri” BQ G-2, “Töles Begleri” BQ S 2, “Toquz Oguz Begleri” BQ N-1, “On-Oq Begleri” TII W-8.

<sup>576</sup> “Bars Beg” KT E20; “Yigen Silig” Beg KT E-33.

*bökesi erti* ‘his brave and strong warrior’.<sup>577</sup> Shortly, depends on the concept the term was used as brave or warrior.

**2 Alpagu(t):** It also means warrior as alp. This title takes place in Kül Tegin inscription.<sup>578</sup>

**3 Böke:** It is a military title and it means warrior or wrestler.<sup>579</sup>

**4 Čabiš:** A military title. And it means sergeant.<sup>580</sup> Čabiš is referred to as commander and ambassador in two places in Orkhon Inscriptions.<sup>581</sup> In the Chinese sources, the person who was sent to the Chinese palace as the ambassador by the Türks in 735 and 737 years was called čabiš.<sup>582</sup>

**5 Er Başı:** It is a military title and it means a commander, head of the soldiers.<sup>583</sup>

**6 Sängün (jiang-zhun):** It is a military title that means general or commander.<sup>584</sup>

In a form *sängün* it is preserved only in the inscriptions of Orkhon and in the inscription of Tonyuquq. In China, the title *jiang-zhun* had meant ‘general’ from the earliest times. From the age of the Qin-dynasty (3<sup>rd</sup> -4<sup>th</sup> centuries) on, the governors of provinces (the tu-tu-s), leading military expeditions to the frontier territories, and later on even those who were merely in service there were given automatically the title of general. It was natural that the Türks acquired the official name of the Chinese generals.<sup>585</sup>

Tai sängün / *da-jiang-zhun*: It was a higher rank than the *jiang-zhun*; in older times of China, it was equivalent to *zai-xiang* ‘chief minister’, but among the Türks it meant only ‘general’.<sup>586</sup>

**7 Sü Başı:** It is a military title that means army commander. It is mentioned in Šine Usu and Tonyuquq Inscription.<sup>587</sup>

**8 Toquzyüz Erbaşı:** It’s a military title that we don’t know the duty of.<sup>588</sup>

**9 Urungu:** A military title and it means warrior.

Urungu Cigši (Elegeš IV Ins.)

<sup>577</sup> Küli Čor Ins. E-5.; CLAUSON 1972: 127.

<sup>578</sup> CLAUSON 1972: 128; ORKUN 1940: 193.

<sup>579</sup> GÖMEÇ 2000: 933.

<sup>580</sup> “Čabiš Sengün” (Terhin Ins.) “Čabiš Tun Tarqan” (Uybat I Ins.) GÖMEÇ 2000: 934.

<sup>581</sup> T Ins. I, W-7, Küli Čor E-5; TEKİN 1968: 258.

<sup>582</sup> DONUK 1988: 92.

<sup>583</sup> GÖMEÇ 2000: 935.

<sup>584</sup> Caca Sengün (BQ Ins., KT Ins.), Enik Sangün (KT Ins.), Udar Sengün (KT Ins.), Ku Sengün (T Ins.); GÖMEÇ 2000: 941

<sup>585</sup> ECSÉDY 1965: 87-88.

<sup>586</sup> ECSÉDY 1965: 89.

<sup>587</sup> DOERFER 1965: 397; GÖMEÇ 2000: 941.

<sup>588</sup> GÖMEÇ 2000: 944.

Urungu Kulug (Elegeš I Ins.)

Urungu Sangun (Miran Texts)<sup>589</sup>

**10 Yüzbaşı:** It's a military title. And it means captain that we can assume that under his command there were 100 warriors.<sup>590</sup>

Yüzbaşı Ulug Urungu (Terhin Ins.)<sup>591</sup>

## 5. ADMINISTRATIVE TITLES

**1 Aygucı:** It is an administrative title derived from the verb *ay-*. In the Turkic inscriptions, it is mentioned as the title of Tonyuquq.<sup>592</sup> It is referred to as the chief advisor of the state.<sup>593</sup> Ligeti cited this word as a civilian rank in the sense of "speaking".<sup>594</sup> Kutadgu Bilig is also referred to as "narrator" (poetry, etc.).<sup>595</sup>

**2 Baga:** It is shown as an administrative title and in our opinion, it is connected with the word *bag*. Accordingly, the word *bag* is used for the military commanders of the tribes that formed a confederation.<sup>596</sup>

**3 Bedizciy:** This title means painter or artist working in the palace.

**4 Bidgüči er:** It is an administrative title. This title means clerk.<sup>597</sup>

**5 Boyla:** It is an administrative title. This title, which is also seen among the Bulgars, is said to be unclear, but this title must have something to do with the rulers of tribes. For example, we can think of Tonyuquq as a person who commanded the tribes during the A-shina family to get power again. Likewise, Boyla Qutlug Yargan in the Inscription of Suci may be the ruler of Kirgiz tribes.<sup>598</sup>

**6 Čegši (ci-shi):** This term, which is said to be a "regional judge" in Middle Chinese, is an administrative title.<sup>599</sup> This title can be found as far back as the Han-time (2<sup>nd</sup> century B. C.), when the *ci-shi* passed through the provinces, controlling them by imperial order. But in the time of the Three Kingdoms (3<sup>rd</sup> century), this rank belonged to the titles of the *tu-tu*, and its importance increased, when the rank *tu-tu* ceased (in 558). The Türks could adopt the title

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<sup>589</sup> GÖMEÇ 2000: 945.

<sup>590</sup> DOBROVITS 2004: 188.

<sup>591</sup> GÖMEÇ 2000: 945.

<sup>592</sup> "Kağanı alp ermiş, aygučısı bilge ermiş" (T Ins. I. N-29). Ayguči Avluč Tarqan; CLAUSON 1972: 271.

<sup>593</sup> DONUK 1988: 2.

<sup>594</sup> LIGETI 1961: 241.

<sup>595</sup> DONUK 1988: 2.

<sup>596</sup> Boyla Baga Tarqan (T Ins., BQ); GÖMEÇ 2000: 931.

<sup>597</sup> GÖMEÇ 2000: 933; CLAUSON 1972: 385,

<sup>598</sup> Boyla Baga Tarqan (T Ins.), Boyla Qutlug Yargan (Suci Ins.); GÖMEÇ 2000: 933. CLAUSON 1972: 385.

<sup>599</sup> GÖMEÇ 2000: 934.

*ci-shi*, meaning ‘governor, military commander of high rank’ most probably in the 7<sup>th</sup> century or in the early 8<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>600</sup>

**7 Elči:** It is an administrative title. It probably meant envoy or ambassador. It states in Uybat VI, Uyük-Tarlak ve Čakul II Inscriptions.<sup>601</sup>

**8 Inal:** It’s an administrative title we don’t know about the duty of it.<sup>602</sup>

**9 Inač:** It’s an administrative title. It might be more or less the same as *inal*.<sup>603</sup>

**10 Inanču:** It’s an administrative title. This title is a Turkic title, which means believing and trusting. In the Orkhon ins. it is referred to as “Tarduš Inanču Čor” and “Inanču Apa Yargan Tarqan”. It is also one of the titles of Kül Tegin.<sup>604</sup>

**11 Išbara:** It is an Iranian origin administrative and military title. Clauson, says that means “beg-prince” in Tokharic and Sanskrit. In addition, one of the Türk qagan’s name was Išbara.<sup>605</sup>

**12 İčreki:** It is the title of the officers in the palace or center of the state.<sup>606</sup>

**13 Üge:** It is an administrative title in the meaning of elder in a community, adviser, minister. Although the title is not on the Orkhon Inscriptions, we can find it on the Bugut Inscription. In the last interpretable line of the text of the inscription (B 3, 5) we can read about a *üge tarqan*.<sup>607</sup> Roughly it was corresponding to the Islamic title vizier. In the rank, they were below the *buyruq* and *erkin*.<sup>608</sup>

**14 Qunčuy – gong-zhu:** In China from the earliest times, it meant ‘the daughter of the ruler’. As a sign of the imperial favor, several princesses were sent to the courts of foreign rulers, so their title, too, must have wandered with them rather early. Abroad it meant ‘noble lady’ beside ‘princess’ (since naturally, the many ‘princesses’ from the court were not all daughters of the emperor). The title got to the Sogdians too, in the form *ywnčwyh*.<sup>609</sup> Kashgari describes the *qunčuy* as woman, wise, or princess one degree below the *qatun*.<sup>610</sup> In the period of the Türks, the word *qunčuy* was used as a princess.<sup>611</sup>

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<sup>600</sup> ECSEDY 1965: 86.

<sup>601</sup> GÖMEÇ 2000: 935.

<sup>602</sup> GÖMEÇ 2000: 935.

<sup>603</sup> GÖMEÇ 2000: 936.

<sup>604</sup> DONUK 1988: 17; GÖMEÇ 2000: 936

<sup>605</sup> Išbara Yamtar (KT Ins.); DONUK 1988: 18; GÖMEÇ 2000: 936.

<sup>606</sup> İčreki Bedizciy (BQ Ins.); GÖMEÇ 2000: 937.

<sup>607</sup> DOBROVITS 2004: 190.

<sup>608</sup> DOERFER 1965: 397.

<sup>609</sup> ECSEDY 1965: 88.

<sup>610</sup> KASHGARI (DLT III: 340)

<sup>611</sup> KT E-20, N-9, BQ E 16.



**15 Sabçı:** It is an administrative title that means prosecutor or ambassador.<sup>612</sup>

**16 Tamgaçı:** It is an administrative title that means tac officer or stamper.<sup>613</sup>

**17 Taygun-Toygun:** It takes place in the names of the members of the assembly of an administrative title.<sup>614</sup>

**18 Tengriken:** One of the titles of statesmen with religious duties. The word originates from *tengri*, the god/sky.<sup>615</sup>

**19 Tor:** It is an administrative title in the sense of *beg*, elder in a community.<sup>616</sup>

**20 Turgak Başı:** It is an administrative name, and it means doorman or guard. He is probably the officer who takes care of the yurt of the qagan and welcomes the guest statesmen.<sup>617</sup>

**21 Yargan:** It's an administrative title that means a judge. It is also one of the titles of Tonyuquq.<sup>618</sup>

**22 Yelme Eri:** It is a military title in the sense of intelligence and cavalry. It is mentioned in Tonyuquq and Šine-Usu.<sup>619</sup>

## 6. ADJECTIVAL TITLES

**1 Bilge:** It is both an administrative and a military title. The “wise” here is both the title of the Bilge Qagan and a characteristic that all qagans should have.<sup>620</sup>

**2 Bögü:** With a mysterious spirit and wise and magician meaning, it can be an administrative title given to male *kams*.<sup>621</sup>

**3 Elterish:** It is an administrative title that means organizing the state. On the occasion of Elterish Qagan's title, we see it in the inscriptions Kül Tegin, Bilge Qagan, and Tonyuquq.<sup>622</sup>

**4 Kapgan:** It is the name of one of the Türk qagan. It derives from the word grabber and means conqueror.<sup>623</sup>

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<sup>612</sup> GÖMEÇ 2000: 940.

<sup>613</sup> DOERFER 1965: 398.

<sup>614</sup> Toygun Elteber (KT Ins.); Toquzyüz Erbaşı Toykun Ulug Tarqan (Terhin Ins.); GÖMEÇ 2000: 943.

<sup>615</sup> GÖMEÇ 2000: 943.

<sup>616</sup> GÖMEÇ 2000: 944.

<sup>617</sup> Turgak Başı Kagas Atacuk (Terhin Ins.); GÖMEÇ 2000: 944.

<sup>618</sup> Boyla Qutlug Yargan (Suci Ins.), Inancu Apa Yargan Tarqan (KT Ins.); DONUK 1988: 91; GÖMEÇ 2000: 945.

<sup>619</sup> GÖMEÇ 2000: 945.

<sup>620</sup> GÖMEÇ 2000: 932.

<sup>621</sup> One of the titles of Kapgan Qagan (T Ins.); GÖMEÇ 2000: 933.

<sup>622</sup> GÖMEÇ 2000: 937.

<sup>623</sup> DONUK 1988: 28.

**5 Kara:** It is an administrative and political title. It expresses greatness, nobility, and oldness.<sup>624</sup>

**6 Qutlug:** It is a military and administrative title. It means the one who has qut. It is also one of the requirements of political domination according to the belief of the period.<sup>625</sup>

**7 Küč:** It means strength which is one of the symbols of political domination. It was used as the title of some leaders. *Küč* ‘strength’ and *küčlüg* ‘strong’ existed in the earliest Turkic languages. In the Orkhon Inscriptions, we find such phrase as *tengri küč bertük üçün* “because Heaven gave him strength”.<sup>626</sup>

**9 Idi-Qut:** The title of the head of the Basmil tribe in the Bilge Qagan inscription. This term comes to the meaning of the sacred same as *Tengri-qut*.<sup>627</sup>

**10 Köni:** It is an administrative title that means righteousness and honesty.<sup>628</sup>

**11 Tirig:** It means the pole that keeps the state alive. It’s an administrative title.<sup>629</sup>

## 7. ORIGIN OF THE TITLES

According to G. Doerfer, the title *bäg* (*beg*), as well as such other Old Turkic titles as *qan*, *qayan*, *qatun*, *batur* (*bayatur*), *tegin*, *yabgu* (*yabyu*), *šad*, *tarqan* and others had been borrowed by the Türks from the Ruanruans.<sup>630</sup> They include such ‘purely’ Turkic titles as *erkin* and *eltäbär*. In point of fact, these titles are mentioned in the sources much earlier than the Türk Qaganate emerged, i.e. in the 5th and 6th centuries, in connection with the governing system of the state of the Ruanruans and this is confirmed by the data of the Chinese chronicles.<sup>631</sup>

There are historians and linguists who claim that titles such as *išbara*, *čor*, *yabgu*, *šad*, *šadapit*, *tarqan* etc. are of Iranian origin probably borrowed from their Sogdian subjects.

On the other hand, Ecsedy has a remarkable study on the Turkic titles of Chinese origin. In her work, she presents some titles such as *tudun*, *tutuq*, *qunchuy*, *čegši*, etc. were of Chinese origin.

The eastern part of the Türk Empire extended along China’s borders, often into Chinese territory for nearly two centuries (552 — 742/744). Even after the downfall of the Türk Empire when many Turkic speaking tribes (those of the Uyгур, Kirgiz, and Qarluq empires)

<sup>624</sup> Kara Türgiř Bodun (KT); GÖMEÇ 2000: 938.

<sup>625</sup> Used as a title of many personal names in different Turkic inscriptions (e.g. Bilge Tarqan Qutlug, Alp Qutlug); GÖMEÇ 2000: 939

<sup>626</sup> CLAUSON 1962: 95.

<sup>627</sup> DONUK 1988: 19.

<sup>628</sup> GÖMEÇ 2000: 939.

<sup>629</sup> GÖMEÇ 2000. 943.

<sup>630</sup> DOERFER 1965: 405, 541.

<sup>631</sup> BABAYAROV 2013: 162.

went on living near China. According to Chinese sources, Chinese titles were conferred not only on the Türk or Uyğur leaders serving the emperor or living in China in the Chinese fashion but also upon the actual leaders of the foreign tribes as a token and pledge of the federation. Most of these titles were obviously merely honorary ones or old titles that were no longer associated with official duties. The Chinese titles borrowed by the Türks are evidence that the Türks were affected by the Chinese hierarchical system and official ranks.<sup>632</sup>

Ecsedy Ildikó classifies the adoption of the Chinese titles in the Turkic languages into three groups:

1. Real loan-words, indicating a Turkic dignity by an expression of Chinese origin.
2. Occasional transcriptions of Chinese official titles.
3. Adoption of the names of Chinese ranks, becoming mere titles of respect in Turkic.

The fact is worth considering, that the Turkic official titles, borrowed from Chinese, concern mostly the country officials, living far from the capital, serving on frontier territories, or at least in distant provinces. So, it seems probable that their adoption can be explained first of all by a connection with the Chinese officials of the frontier garrisons and not e.g. by the grant of titles to foreigners, usual in China. Buddhism was the transmitter of the titles of respect of Chinese origin, and the other official names, too, were adopted by the Türks because of special reasons and not in consequence of their connection with the Chinese bureaucracy. Still, they seem to have preserved their own and characteristic organization even in the close neighbourhood of China.<sup>633</sup>

When the Turkic Inscriptions and the Old Uyğur texts are examined, it is seen that the majority of the military ranks and titles are of Turkic origin. However, the sources also contain many titles from Iranian languages such as Sogdian, and several titles from Chinese. There are different reasons for the excess of titles borrowed from different languages in the hierarchical system of the Türks. The most important of these are political, cultural, bureaucratic, and commercial relations with other states. Another reason was that the Türks had Sogdian and Chinese civil servants under their rule. As a conclusion, we can reach the point that the Türks borrowed many titles from other languages, they adapted those titles into their state system.

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<sup>632</sup> ECSEDY 1965: 83.

<sup>633</sup> ECSEDY 1965: 90-91.

## CHAPTER IV

### SOCIAL STRATA AND THE STATE

#### 1. SOCIAL STRUCTURE

When describing the internal structure of a nomadic empire, the fundamental question is what terminology should we use to define power relations. It wouldn't make sense if we would describe their imperial organization in the modern sense. In the present chapter, we attempt to gather our information on the social and state structure of the Türks. And it is possible to find the correct terms with the Türks' own internal terminology.

##### 1.1. Oyuš-eb

The term *oyuš* occurs in the royal inscriptions practically only four times, since in three instances the texts of both the Kül Tegin inscription and that of Bilge Qagan are repetitious. It is used almost exclusively with reference to the ruling dynasty.

Bilge Qagan, while addressing his audience in 732, refers to them as 'my younger brothers, my sons', after which follows: *beriki oyušum* 'my united dynasty member'. Only with reference to them the term *beriki* 'united' was used since they were as vassals (imperial governors) distributed east and west the whole empire.<sup>634</sup>

According to Tekin, *oyuš* means clan, tribe.<sup>635</sup> On the other hand, Clauson explains the word *oyuš* in the early period a population unit smaller than a tribe, or a clan but larger than a single unitary family, extended family, or, less precisely family; from this, it came to mean a generation or degree of relationship.<sup>636</sup> Although there are various meanings in this translation (tribe, clan, lineage, relatives, generation, family), it is understood from the inscriptions that it expresses the concept of family. Later, it is stated that the small units that were connected with blood ties among the Uygurs were called *oyuš* too.<sup>637</sup>

Communities are formed from families. The family is a small model of the state, which is the base of the state. For this reason, the similarity between the state order and the family order was very vivid in Türks' society. The Türks' family structure was a nuclear family formed by mother, father, and children living in a *yurt*.<sup>638</sup>

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<sup>634</sup> PRITSAK 1988: 757.

<sup>635</sup> TEKİN 1968: 357.

<sup>636</sup> CLAUSON 1972: 96.

<sup>637</sup> DONUK 1988: 81.

<sup>638</sup> DONUK 1982: 147.

The smallest segment of the social-economic structure of the Türks was the *eb* ‘tent; house’, as shelter of the families.<sup>639</sup> The name was given to the process of establishing a family with a man and a woman in Turkic, the statement of marriage also indicates that the married man or girl leaves the father’s home and creates a separate house-hold (family). In the inscription of Sudzi: *inim yiti, urım üç, kızım üç erti. Ebledim oylumun...* in the sentence the word *eble* is getting married. In general concept it means having a house.<sup>640</sup>

### 1.2. Urug

Although the term *urug* means in the social structure is not fully clarified, it is possible to be taken as the meaning of ‘unity of families’ or ‘descendants of a common ancestor’.<sup>641</sup> Families that support each other socially and economically would come together, and decisions about *urugs* were taken and implemented by the heads of the *oyuŝ*. *Urugs* were not an independent structure, but a political part of the *bod* (clan).

In the Orkhon Inscriptions, the meaning of the word can be explained as ancestry in the phrase *Türk bodunu öldüreyim, urugsıratayım tir imiş*. In other words, this word means the union of families.<sup>642</sup> The word *urug* alone is not found in old Turkic inscriptions. Instead, we encounter the verb form *urugsıtmak* derived from this word. *Urugsıtmak* expresses the meaning of being deprived of the progeny.<sup>643</sup>

### 1.3. Bod-bodun

The word *bod*, which is evaluated with the broadest meaning in Turkic, undoubtedly meant a certain community unit in the old Turkic social structure. That is to say, when families or lineages came together, *bod* was formed. The *bods* had separate lands, herds of animals, and armed forces, which were distinguished from each other by various stamps. At the head of the *bod* was a beg responsible for maintaining the order in the tribe.<sup>644</sup>

Several extended families (*el-kün*) were united into a larger community called *boy*, or clan, literally ‘bond, tie, bundle’. The boys were joined in the highest social body *bod* or ‘proto tribe’. The word’s literal meaning was ‘stature, the size of a man; body’.<sup>645</sup>

Besides this, there was another term which is *oq* refers to the smaller political structure as *bod*. It refers to a *bod* attached to a political institution. According to Orkhon Inscriptions, the *bods* that formed the Western Türks were called *On Oq*, of which they were built from 10

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<sup>639</sup> PRITSAK 1988: 758.

<sup>640</sup> DONUK 1982: 164.

<sup>641</sup> CLAUSON 1972: 214.

<sup>642</sup> DONUK 1988: 89-90.

<sup>643</sup> İNAN 1956: 182.

<sup>644</sup> DONUK 1988: 71.

<sup>645</sup> PRITSAK 1988: 763.

tribes, 5 in the east and 5 in the west. There were 5 *čors* at the head of the To-lu *bod* in the east and 5 *erkins* at the head of the Nu-shi-bi *bod* in the west. To each of those 10 leaders bearing these titles was given an arrow by *qagan* to indicate that they were attached to the center.<sup>646</sup> According to the widely accepted view, the Chinese term *xing* is etymologically identical with the Turkic word *oq* ‘arrow’. The Chinese sources call *jiu xing* (‘Nine Surnames’) the confederation of the toquz ‘nine’ *oyuz*. It means that *oyuz* in itself could also mean ‘tribe’. The most frequently used expression ‘xing’ in the Chinese sources could mean both ‘tribe’ and ‘clan’. Together with a numeral it could also denote a tribal confederation, such as *jiu xing* ‘The Nine Surnames’ which stood for the Toquz Oguz, *shi xing* ‘Ten Surnames’ for the On Oq, i.e. the Western Türks, and *san xing geluolu* ‘Three Surnames of the Qarluq’ for the üç qarluq of the Turkic inscriptions.<sup>647</sup>

The term *bodun*, which is very common in Orkhon Inscriptions, is generally meant as “people, the nation”. The communities of China, Kitay, Oguz, Kirgiz, Türgish, and Qarluq were also referred to as this term. *Bodun*, which is formed by the addition of the plural suffix of the word *bod*, means the union of the tribes.<sup>648</sup>

And in fact, the term for the Turkic tribal state was the plural/collective form of *bod*, namely *bodun*. Like in the case of *er* (singular) ‘man’, and *eren* (collective) ‘real man, hero’, the ‘quantity’ here changes into ‘quality’. While *bod* was still just a nomadic unit, *bodun* designated the political tribe, the tribal polity, the territorial unit. Tonyuquq, the described the situation ca. 683 as follows: *Türk Sir bodun yerinte bod qalmadi* ‘on the land of the bodun of both the Türks and of the Sirs, no tribe had remained’.

Still another passage from the same inscription should be quoted here since it explicitly names these two basic poles of a nomadic structure: social (*bod*) and political (*bodun*): *bod yema bodun yema kiši yema idi yoq erteči erti* ‘(if the qagan Elterish and I, myself, Tonyuquq would not exist) there would not have been a (social) tribe (*bod*), or a political tribe (*bodun*), or even an (ordinary) man’ (T. Ins., II. N-2).<sup>649</sup>

Clausen’s explanation on *bodun* is as follows: “Clans in practice a semi-technical term for an organized tribal community, a people, in the sense of a community ruled by a particular ruler; hence, esp. in such phr. As *kara bodun*, the common people, in antithesis to the supreme ruler and the subordinate tribal or clan rulers, the begs.” According to him the term *bodun* had

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<sup>646</sup> DONUK1988: 82.

<sup>647</sup> DOBROVITS 2004c: 257-258.

<sup>648</sup> DONUK1988: 71-72.

<sup>649</sup> PRITSAK 1988: 764.

three main meanings: 1) in the expression used by a ruler *bodunım* ‘my people’. 2) preceded by an ethnic name, which may be either Turkic or foreign, e.g. *Türk bodun*; *Tavgač bodun* “the Chinese people” etc. 3) The later meaning occurs in *kara bodun* ‘the common people’ and *Türk kara kamay bodun* ‘all the Türk common people’.<sup>650</sup>

According to Vásáry, *bodun* has two meanings. First, it included the whole of Turkic society, all Türks were part of the *Türk bodun*. In this respect its meaning can be described by the words ‘tribe’ or depending on its size, ‘tribal alliance’ with common descent and territory. Secondly, according to him *bodun* means ‘common people’.<sup>651</sup>

Golden translates this term as: “The tribes, composed of clans, were organized into *boduns* which was a grouping of tribes and sub-tribes.”<sup>652</sup>

According to the work of Szűcs Jenő, there are all together nine meanings of *bodun*: 1. Group of people, a mass. 2. The name *Türk bodun* meant the community of the ancestors of the Türks in the age of the formation of the empire. 3. In the age of the Orkhon Inscriptions, the *Türk bodun* meant the tribal organization of the Türks, which was the maintainer of the organization of *el*. 4. Foreign peoples of the four quarters. 5. The settled neighbours, who most of the time themselves had their own power organization (*el*). 6. Any nomadic tribal alliance that has peacefully or forcibly become part of the Türk Qaganate. 7. Foreign tribe (*Izgil bodun*, *Ediz bodun*). 8. As a common use *begler bodun* composition, in which *begler* denotes the elite group, and *bodun* represents the common people. 9. Subjects of the qagan.<sup>653</sup>

Sometimes the two terms, *beg* and *bodun* occur together, as e.g. *Begli bodunluy yonşurtuqin üçün* ‘(the Chinese) caused the chiefs (*beg*) and tribal polities (*bodun*) to slander one another’. While becoming a polity (*bodun*) a social clan (*bod*) was organized in military-taxation units.<sup>654</sup> (Table 1)

The word *bodun* is more related to ethnonym. It is mentioned 163 times in Turkic Inscriptions: 103 times in the sense of ethnonym, 50 of this was used in the form of a *Türk bodun* and 53 in the names of other peoples.<sup>655</sup>

In fact, *bodun* is an ‘institution of Qaganate’ that organizes many tribes in the same union and we can consider the members of that structure as ethnic unity in the form of family, cultural community, and language community.<sup>656</sup>

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<sup>650</sup> CLAUSON 1972: 306.

<sup>651</sup> VÁSÁRY 1983: 194–195.

<sup>652</sup> GOLDEN 1982: 50.

<sup>653</sup> SZÜCS 1992: 199–203.

<sup>654</sup> PRITSAK 1987: 764.

<sup>655</sup> ZIMONYI 2003: 64.

<sup>656</sup> ZIMONYI 2003: 66.

### 1.3.1. Ak bodun/kara bodun

The Old Turkic sources clearly distinguish three social strata based on hereditary ‘genealogical’ social differentiation: the dynasty; and two classes, the aristocracy (ak bodun), and the common people (kara bodun).<sup>657</sup> The name of the ruling tribe of the Türks was Türk; the name of its royal clan, or *inčü*, was A-shi-na, known only from the Chinese sources. In agnatic kinship terms the dynasty was called *oyuś* and its members got the title of *tegin* ‘prince’.<sup>658</sup>

The term *bodun* as social stratum has two meanings, one general, ‘the common people (herdsmen)’, and one specific, namely ‘herdsmen-at-arms’, with attributes: *kara bodun*, *kara igul bodun*, *kara qamay bodun*. The meaning of *igul* is ‘common, lower class’, while *qamay* means ‘all’.<sup>659</sup>

## 2. EL

There is a need for a strong army to hold the country, wealth to feed the army, and provide its equipment, and fair laws for all. In fact, when all the Türk Qaganate history is examined, it will be seen that in the state tradition, custom and state are the concepts that are never separated. In the Orkhon Inscriptions, the word *törü*, was used in eleven times, in six of them, it is written with the word *el*. In other words, state and laws were inseparable concepts.<sup>660</sup>

The tribal organization (*bodun*) and the political structure (*el*) complemented one another, defining the strength and durability of social ties; in the words of the Türk inscriptions, the *qagan el tutup bodunım başladım* (controlled the state and was head of the tribal group).<sup>661</sup>

Thomsen’s opinion about the term is ‘unification of tribes, empire’.<sup>662</sup> Giraud translates as an ‘empire’ and sees the emergence of political power in it.<sup>663</sup>

Golden explains the term *el* as a political power over the *bodun* was expressed by the term *el* which, in course of time, developed a variety of extended meanings: “imperium, tribal union or organization, the people, the state, the state organization”, in short, a polity.<sup>664</sup>

According to Clauson, the basic, original meaning was a political unit organized and ruled by an independent ruler; the most convenient short term in English is the realm. As the

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<sup>657</sup> KÜRSAT-AHLERS 1994: 317.

<sup>658</sup> PRITSAK 1988: 770.

<sup>659</sup> PRITSAK 1988: 771.

<sup>660</sup> KAFESOĞLU 2000: 246.

<sup>661</sup> SINOR, KLYASHTORNY 1996: 336.

<sup>662</sup> THOMSEN 1924: 129, 172.

<sup>663</sup> GIRAUD 1960: 69–70.

<sup>664</sup> GOLDEN 1982: 50.



Türks became involved in international politics it also began to have an international application and came to mean ‘organized international relations’ from which the transition to ‘peace’ one of its modern meanings, was an easy one. According to Clauson, the real meaning is not the concept of “peace”, but rather the “state”.<sup>665</sup>

Doerfer describes it as follows: “The oldest form of the word *el* has very clearly two main meanings: 1) Peace, state of peace, 2) Confederation of the tribes. The concept of the term *el* can be interpreted as “peace” in this respect. Even though the word “peace” does not have the meaning of “peace” but of the unity of the troops with each other.”<sup>666</sup>

There are three essential terms in the Old Turkic concept of rule: *el*, *törü*, and *qut-ülüg*. The original reconstructable meaning of the etymon *el* was ‘peace’ and it is comparable to the medieval Western idea of ‘king’s peace’. The joint rulers (qagans) had as their first duty, to maintain their peace (*ellig tut-*) by organizing tribes into a polity also called ‘peace’ (*el*). This was done on the basis of the traditional customary laws (*törü*) which the presiding supreme *qagan* pleaded to put in action. His capacity to successfully act was dependent on the mandate from God Tengri which was manifested in the rulers’ possession of *qut-ülüg*.<sup>667</sup>

According to Zimonyi, based on the Orkhon Inscriptions, there were five conditions to build *el*: 1. 1. Whoever rules the people (bodun) also directs the war (sü sülä-). If the successful commander can guarantee the independence of his own structure, he becomes the qagan and his union (bodun) is called *ellig qayanlik*. The aim of expeditions is to defeat the other troops and destroy the great nomadic states. The most ideal is to subdue the troops all over the world. However, the qagan ultimately increased his influence in the world sovereignty. Between 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> centuries they tried to gather the steppe peoples under their own power, and they figured it out, at least the conquest of China or the Tibetan state. 2. The ruler as well as the elite had to be wise and brave. 3. There had to be a consensus between the tribal aristocracy (begler) and the common people (bodun). 4. The power of the qagan came from the Heaven (tengri), which was also the basis of the universalism of power. 5. The qagan must have possessed the sacred center of the state, Ötüken.

What remains is to determine: First, *el* meant the political power over the tribal confederation, and then very different societies. This power is independent of other rulers; because *el* and the absolute ruler qagan originated from the sky (god). In fact, it means the formation of great power in the political sense.

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<sup>665</sup> CLAUSON 1972: 121.

<sup>666</sup> DOERFER (1963-1975): 195.

<sup>667</sup> PRITSAK 1987: 751-752.

The most important difference between the *el* and the *bodun* is this: The *el* means a general group consisting of a wide variety of unions guaranteed only by political commitment. However, *bodun* can be described as the predominantly tribal confederation that covers not only political unity but also ethnic unity. But the side meaning of *bodun* can also be understood as the ‘entourage’ of a qagan, as a member of a group described as hand.<sup>668</sup>

### 2.1. Population size of the Qaganate

Insight into the population size and troop strength of Mongolian Plateau qaganates can be gleaned from scattered figures in Tang and Arabic sources. The Sir-Yantuo had 200,000 quality warriors when they ruled Mongolia in the mid-seventh century.<sup>669</sup> Under the Second Türk Qaganate the number of troops swelled to 400,000 in the early eighth century, but this figure probably includes the Western Türk tribes under Türk domination at the time.<sup>670</sup> A Muslim envoy reported in the late eighth or early ninth century that the Uyгур qagan had 233,000 troops, roughly in line with the earlier Sir-Yantuo total. Extrapolating from these figures, we can estimate that the Mongolian Plateau could support approximately 200,000 to 250,000 troops and 800,000 to one million people. Although the population of the medieval Mongolian Plateau was approximately one-fiftieth of Sui-Tang China, Turkic rulers were competitive in battle because they could mobilize the entire adult male populace to create large armies of quality cavalry. The two Türk Qaganates and the second Uyгур one can be classified as great powers.<sup>671</sup>

## 3. POLITICAL ORGANIZATION OF THE TÜRK STATE EL

Under Elterish Qagan the traditional structure of the Türk state was restored. The empire created by Elterish and his successors was a union of ethnically related and hierarchically co-ordinated tribes and tribal groups; they were ideologically linked by common beliefs and accepted genealogies, and politically united by a single military and administrative organization (*el*) and by general legal norms (*törüs*). The tribal organization (*bodun*) and the political structure (*el*) complemented one another, defining the strength and durability of social ties; in the words of the Türk inscriptions, the qagan ‘*el tutup bodunım başladım*’ (controlled the state and was head of the tribal group).<sup>672</sup>

### 3.1. Törü

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<sup>668</sup> ZIMONYI 2003: 74-76.

<sup>669</sup> JTS 195:5195, 199b:5344.

<sup>670</sup> JTS 194a:5172; ZZTJ 206:6535, 6543.

<sup>671</sup> SKAFF 2012: 37.

<sup>672</sup> SINOR, KLYASHTORNY 1996: 336.

According to Giraud, the word refers to the ‘customary law’ of which the qagan was only the executor.<sup>673</sup> According to his own inscription, Bilge Qagan was a good ruler. Because he did not destroy the people, obtained to *törü*, he led campaigns and enriched his people.<sup>674</sup>

Our Chinese sources, Zhou-shu and Sui-shu, provide the same samples about the law of the Türks. According to them, the older ones were respected and the younger ones were valued. As for the specific rules, we know the following: Those who rebelled, betrayed, or even killed people were sentenced to death. According to Zhou-shu, kidnapping a married woman and robbery of a horse also resulted with death penalty. According to the same source, the kidnapping of a maiden girl was more lenient. The abductor had to marry the abducted girl immediately. The rapist was first emasculated and then his body was split in two. Whoever punched someone’s eyes, was obliged to give his daughter to the victim. If he did not have a daughter, he had to give away his wife and all his property. Whoever broke the other's bone had to give him a horse. The thief was required to reimburse the stolen property ten times.<sup>675</sup>

Amongst the most important functions of the qagan, after forming the tribal union, was the establishment of the *törü* (the laws of the tribal union, it was based on tribal and customary law) for the entire union. Thus, the Orkhon Inscriptions inform us that Bumin and his brother Ištemi, the founders of the First Türk Qaganate: *Türk bodunıng elin törüsin tuta birmiř* “they established the political organization and laws of the tribal union”.<sup>676</sup>

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### 3.2. Qurultai

In the Türk state, there was a council apart from qagan. political, military, economic, and cultural issues that concern the state were discussed and resolved here. Türk Qagans would not take decisions alone in state-owned affairs. These councils were given names such as *toy*, *kengeř*, and *qurultai*. Qagan was the head of the qurultai. When Qagan was not available, the council was led by state consultants referred to as *ayguci* or *üge*. Military and administrative high officials such as *yabgu*, *tegin*, *elteber*, *erkin*, *küli čor*, *apa*, *tudun*, *tarqan*, especially *qatun*

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<sup>673</sup> GIRAUD 1960: 71–72.

<sup>674</sup> DOBROVITS 2004: 179.

<sup>675</sup> MAU-TSAI 1958: 9, 41–42. DOBROVITS 2004: 179.

<sup>676</sup> GOLDEN 1982: 51.

<sup>677</sup> SINOR, KLYASHTORNY 1996: 336.

and *šad* were natural members of the state assembly. Some of the members of the state council were elected from the dynasty and some were from outside the dynasty. Every *bod* representative had to be present at the assembly meetings.<sup>678</sup>

Taizong's gathering of Türks at the capital mimicked a qurultai, which was an assembly of nomadic chiefs that either determined a successor to a deceased qagan or proclaimed the formal accession of a ruler who had united tribes by conquest. The qurultai of the Türks are not well documented. The Bugut stele describes a ceremony of 572 in which Taspar Qagan acceded to the request of tribal elites to "rule the seven continents...and feed the people!".<sup>679</sup>

### 3.3. Yurt

First of all, we have to mention another significant innovation which is *yurt*. Yurt was a shelter for a nomad family, furthermore, its palace form was the shelter and decision center for the state issues of qagan who is the supreme power of the state. Because herds are permanently in need of new pastures, nomads are to move from one place to another several time a year. Chinese chronicles depict a stereotyped formula, that the Xiongnu nomads "move about according to the availability of water and pasture, have no walled towns or fixed residences, nor any agricultural activities".<sup>680</sup> Similar information is contained in sources on the Türks, Uyghurs, Mongols, and other nomads. The *yurt* was a great architectural invention of the nomads. The circular form allows the most efficient use of the internal space. The yurt protects against the cold in winter and against heat in summer; it has optimal aerodynamic qualities. It is tolerant of strong winds and even hurricanes. A *yurt* without the timber floor weighs about 200 kg, felt constitutes about 75 % of this weight. The *yurt* could be put up within one hour.<sup>681</sup>

Andrews published an exhaustive monography on the felt tents and pavilions of the nomadic peoples in which he demonstrated that the *yurt* had first appeared in the Türk Qaganate. The term *käräkü*, which he interpreted as yurt, appeared for the first time in 732 in the Türk runic inscription.<sup>682</sup>

Movements of this magnitude required good logistics and substantial infrastructure. Food requirements, only partly met by hunting, and some of the water had to be transported. Also, the tent needed to host the royal family too. In Turkic and Mongolian states, a special

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<sup>678</sup> KOCA 2003: 78.

<sup>679</sup> SKAFF 2012: 120.

<sup>680</sup> BICHURIN 1950: 29.

<sup>681</sup> KRADIN 2015: 20-21.

<sup>682</sup> ANDREWS 1999: 107–110.

officer, called a *yurtchi*, was in charge of the royal tents and equipment on all journeys. Little if any distinction was made between the preparations for a hunting trip, imperial progress, or military expedition.<sup>683</sup>

A common aspect of contemporary diplomacy was the creation of splendidly decorated courts. The Byzantines and Sassanids, like the Tang, favored monumental architecture. As pastoral nomads, Turko-Mongol rulers often relied on mobile forms of visual pageantry such as beautifully decorated tents and lavish thrones. For example, Ištemi held audiences for the Byzantine ambassador Zemarchus in three different locations.<sup>684</sup> The first was in a tent where Ištemi was seated on a golden throne with two wheels that allowed it to be drawn by a horse. The interior of the tent was decorated with silk hangings. On the next day, they met in a *yurt* with silk hangings, statues, “golden urns, water sprinklers, and...golden pitchers” where Ištemi sat on a pure gold divan. On the third day, they met in what may have been a permanent dwelling with “gilded wooden pillars and a couch of beaten gold which was supported by golden peacocks”. Half a century later, when Xuanzang met Tong Yabgu, the audience was held in a “large tent” decorated with gold ornaments that “blind the eye with their glitter”.<sup>685</sup> The Turko-Mongol taste for gold and silver wares with elaborate decorations is well documented. The glittering adornment of Tong Yabgu’s tent probably explains why the Türk and Uygur qagans were said to live in the “gold tent”. The Uygur gold tent held 100 people, but larger ones could create even grander displays. In 607, when Sui Yangdi took an imperial inspection tour to the northern Ordos region, the emperor wanted to “show off” to Qimin Qagan and 3,500 Turkic chieftains, so he had a tent erected east of the town said to hold either one or several thousand people. Yangdi hosted a feast and acrobatic show for the chiefs inside. Yangdi later bestowed the tent on Qimin, which would have allowed him to impress his followers.<sup>686</sup>

A late Muslim source of al-Yaqubi (897) also described the yurts of the nomad Turkic people as follows: “(The Türks) have neither houses nor fortresses, they only pitch Turkic domes which are ribbed, and the nails are strips of horses and cattle, and are covered with felt. They are the most skilful of all creatures in manufacturing felt, (even) their clothes are made from it.”<sup>687</sup>

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<sup>683</sup> ALLSEN 2006: 187.

<sup>684</sup> DONUK 1988: 83.

<sup>685</sup> STARK 2010: 57-58.

<sup>686</sup> SKAFF 2012: 150.

<sup>687</sup> ZIMONYI 2016: 140.

### 3.4. The political center: Ötüken or Yinshan?

Before mentioning the political or sacred center of the Türks, mention must be made of a Turkic term *yer-sub* in the Turkic inscriptions. This word combination literally means earth (*yer*) and water (*sub*). The sacred (*ïduq*) land and water of the Türks are mentioned several times in the Orkhon Inscriptions. In one passage in the inscriptions, the *qagan* speaks of organizing a people so as not to remain unruly (*idi-siz*) *yer-sub* possessed by their ancestors. Elsewhere it says *tengri* and the *yer-sub* created the Türk Qaganate. In the case of the *yer-sub* of the Türks, it is a holy place. In light of the data, it turns out that the basic meaning of the term is ‘environment’, and ‘home’.<sup>688</sup> If we go one step further it can mean homeland too.

In 639, crossing the Yellow River, the Tujue under the leadership of Li Si-mo established the base at Ding-xiang-cheng of the Sui period (between the present Inner Mongolia towns Hohhot and Horing) and occupied that location except for a short span until they established the Second Empire. The area around Hohhot, which was the seat of the Qagans in the period of the last three Qagans of the First Empire for more than thirty years, was fertile and hence was coveted by the Türks.<sup>689</sup>

The refugium and probably the cultic center of the Türk state was the *Ötüken yış*.<sup>690</sup> This had been a holy place for the Xiongnu and Ruanruan located in the Khangai Mountains. The later Mongol goddess Etügen is probably to be associated with it. The *Ötüken yış* was also the political center of the Second Eastern Türk Qaganate (681-742/744). This also finds a reflection in the Kül Tegin inscriptions.<sup>691</sup>

Tuldikh was settled after Tardu’s death precisely to the south of the Gobi by the Chinese army. When in 674 the Chinese emperor went to the north to see him in his residence, the meeting took place at Yulin, close to Tuldikh’s court. This is not a Southern court, as opposite to a would-be Northern court in Mongolia: it was never described as such. Moreover, the helpless Tuldikh asked the emperor for permission to be assimilated to the Chinese people, to wear their dress, to have houses built. As made clear by this meeting, he was only a puppet qagan, humiliated in front of his own officers. The text further states that the quite angry emperor demanded Tuldikh to pacify the North, a task which was still to be done, instead of trying to become Chinese. The Chinese answer reveals the limitations of Tuldikh’s rule: he was only in control of what was for the Chinese a buffer zone, the Yinshan, and the upper bent of

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<sup>688</sup> DOBROVITS 2004: 167.

<sup>689</sup> HAYASHI 1990: 147.

<sup>690</sup> Ötüken, called yış ‘mountain grazing ground’ in the Orkhon Inscriptions, is the region of the Khangai Mountains in Mongolia, residence first of the Tujue then of the Uighurs. (BOMBACI 1966a: 17.)

<sup>691</sup> GOLDEN 1982: 48-49.

the Huang-he. He was the Great Qagan of the Türks only in those of the few tribes he managed to gather, and in the eyes of the Chinese historiographers.

The situation changed with his son, Shibi. He was much more powerful than his father and we do have a quite precise idea of what went on in the north during his time: the ancestral land of the Altai was dominated by the Western Türks while the tribes in the Ötüken and farther to the east submitted to Shibi. The Eastern Empire undoubtedly retook control of parts of the North. However, Shibi did not reside there, the political center was south of the Gobi. In the Ötüken and Mongolia were Tiele and Xueyantuo tribes, not the Türks themselves.<sup>692</sup>

This perfectly corroborates what we know of the activities of Shibi, he was always in the south, not in the north, in Ötüken. Shibi and then Xieli raided, year after year, northern China in summer, while in an empire centered north of the Gobi he would have been supposed to be in the north and not in the southern pastures, which were used in winter. The most he did was to send a *šad* to the north in order to quell the Tiele, with ultimately little success, as the *šad* was beaten and expelled. How could a *šad* have been in charge of the Ötüken region, if it was the center of the Turkic power? We do not have the slightest indication of any of these qagans in the north. Their center, their economic basis was the Yinshan.

The power in the north was no longer held by the Türks, but by the Tiele, and as subtribes the Xueyantuo and the Uygur. This fact has been overlooked because in everybody's mind the natural power in the north was the Turkic one. Whatever the source, the Eastern qagans are clearly confined south of the Gobi, not north of it, where the Uygurs hold power more or less under Chinese control. Some Turkic tribes still lived as nomads north of the Gobi, but they had submitted to the Tiele power.<sup>693</sup>

When placed in its proper geopolitical setting, the Chinese policy at the end of the sixth century was to create a buffer zone and to declare this zone an empire as if an actual Eastern Turkic Empire had survived after Turan's death. When chaos erupted in internal Chinese politics, this buffer zone indeed turned into a powerful Southern Empire under Shibi and Xieli. This, however, was a completely unexpected development that proved if anything that it was extremely dangerous to make use of this northern Ordos region to settle nomadic allies; earlier Ordos had been the very first region where the Xiongnu people became powerful.<sup>694</sup>

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<sup>692</sup> VAISSIÈRE 2015: 455.

<sup>693</sup> VAISSIÈRE 2015: 456.

<sup>694</sup> VAISSIÈRE 2015: 457.

In 682, Qutluq Elterish, the founder of the Second Empire, sparked a rebellion that was successful. He extended his power, making the Yinshan Mountains the site of his stronghold.<sup>695</sup> There is no question that the revolt was rooted in the south. The base of the Türks was the Yinshan and the Black River region, that is the region around Hohhot: Czeglédy demonstrated in 1962 that the Čogay Quzi of the Tonyuquq Inscription, where the rebels rallied and created their empire, were none other than the Yinshan (Čogay has the same meaning as Yin, shaded, the northern slope of a mountain) and that the capital of Karakum of the same inscription is Heisha Cheng of the Chinese text (both meaning black sand), a settlement situated on the northern slopes of the Yinshan.<sup>696</sup>

However, this is clearly described as a feature of the past in the Orkhon Inscriptions. The recurrent message in these texts is the praise of the Ötüken, the residence of the Turkic qagans in the final years of the Türk Empire. Thus, one century after Tuldikh's flight from north to south an unnoticed major, reversed geographical shift from south to the north must have been taken place in the organization of the second Turkic Empire.

The reason clearly lies in a devastating strategic defeat of the Türks, which could not be explicitly recognized in such propaganda texts as the official inscriptions: in fact, the Türk was forced to leave the Yinshan by a military move of the Chinese. In 708 the Chinese army cut the Yinshan Türks from the south by establishing three fortified points north of the Huanghe.<sup>697</sup>

However, this strategic defeat, whatever its economic and political importance, was mitigated by the evolution of the empire under the influence of Tonyuquq. Contrary to the early decades of the seventh century, the qagans, and especially their main counselor Tonyuquq, did show interest in the northern part of their empire before having to leave the southern part in 708.<sup>698</sup>

The Orkhon Inscriptions are pure political propaganda, and a close look at what they actually say does confirm this interpretation. When Bilge Qagan inherited the throne or rather took it from his cousin, the Türks were weak, poor, and desperate. According to the Orkhon texts, they had had to migrate to the west and the east. These texts are long political appraisals of the Ötüken and Orkhon regions as opposed to the Čogay Mountain and the Tögültün Valley because the relocation from the south was not voluntary and peaceful: "if you go to the south

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<sup>695</sup> HAYASHI 1990: 142.

<sup>696</sup> VAISSIÈRE 2015: 457-458.

<sup>697</sup> In 708 Tang built three fortresses north of the Yellow River, taking advantage of the Qagan's unguarded moment when he was very busy attacking west (HAYASHI 1990: 150); VAISSIÈRE 2015: 458.

<sup>698</sup> VAISSIÈRE 2015: 458-459.



you will die” the text says, as opposed to “if you stay at the Ötüken then the caravans will come”. This is an attempt to justify the reversal of one century of Turkic history during which the Čogay and Tögültün were the actual home of the Türks, an attempt to conceal that the change was ultimately affected by a Chinese move and a Turkic defeat. The political message of the Orkhon Inscriptions is much clearer once put in this century-long perspective.<sup>699</sup>

In spite of the fascinating but both deceptive and highly political Orkhon Inscriptions, the first nearly fifty years of the eighth century (685 – 743) might be regarded as a quite limited period of Turkic power in the north within a quarter of a millennium (603 – 840) of actual Tiele and Uygur domination.<sup>700</sup>

The chief who didn’t obey the central power had the following options: 1. Escaping south to China; 2. moving on with his tribe away from the metropolis; 3. Revolt. Because the Eurasian Steppe corridor borders in the east on the Amur taiga and Manchuria, it is safer to escape to the west. Here, the steppe stretches over many thousand kilometers and one can move on so far that the costs for any punitive expedition would be unjustified. It is not accidental that all the forced major migrations of nomadic people in the history of Eurasia (beginning with the Xiongnu to the West since the second century) were headed in this direction. Migration was thus a universal method in the struggle against power abuse by leaders in practically every nomadic empire.<sup>701</sup> The Türks preferred moving on to the north and revolt at the same time.

When we set out from here, it is very important for the Türk tribes to settle in the Ötüken Plateau. Because the Türks were able to realize the nomadic lifestyle and also the social-political order in the steppe. However, settling in a neighbour in China has awakened the danger and it has become more and more dangerous for them.<sup>702</sup>

Vaissière’s successful work on analyzing the political center of the Türks gives a good summary of the topic. Without any suspect, we should agree with him that the political center of the Türks (last years of the first qaganate and revolt era of the second qaganate) was Ordos/Yinshan area for a while. Ötüken had ancestral importance for them for sure. As he mentioned above Ötüken in the inscriptions was used for political propaganda to keep the nomad tribes away from central China.

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<sup>699</sup> VAISSIÈRE 2015: 459.

<sup>700</sup> VAISSIÈRE 2015: 459.

<sup>701</sup> KRADIN 2015: 31.

<sup>702</sup> ZIMONYI 2003: 75.

### 3.5. General structure of the Türk state

According to Kradin: “The nomadic empire can be defined as a nomadic society organized on the military/hierarchical principle, occupying quite large areas and exploiting nearby territories, as a rule, by external forms of exploitation. One can identify the following attributes of nomadic empires:

- 1) military-hierarchical character of the social organization of the empire’s center mostly on the decimal principle;
- 2) multistage hierarchical character of the social organization pierced at all levels by tribal and super tribal genealogical ties;
- 3) dualistic (into wings) or triadic (into wings and center) administrative division of the empire;
- 4) specific system of power inheritance;
- 5) horse relay messenger service (*yam*) as a specific way of organizing the administrative infrastructure;
- 6) specific character of relations with the agricultural world.<sup>703</sup>

We have discussed the first two of the points that Kradin grouped in the previous chapters entitled “Military Organisation and the Warfare of the Türk Qaganate” and “Hierarchy of the Türk Qaganate”.

### 3.6. Two-winged administration

Another feature of Türk administration, one, however, which was not universally followed by later nomadic formations was the dual division of the state, the bipartite principle of rule. The Türk Qaganate, shortly after its emergence and following the conquests of İštemi in Central and Western Eurasia, was divided into eastern and western halves.<sup>704</sup> The founder of the state Bumin died, and shortly after Mukan ruled over the eastern part of the empire, centered on Mongolia, while İštemi was in charge of the western areas.<sup>705</sup> The East, considered in Inner Asia the higher position, was the territory of the supreme *Qagan*, while the western half was the residence of the slightly lesser Yabgu Qagan.<sup>706</sup> Thus it can be said that almost from the moment of its inception, the Türk Empire was bicephalous.<sup>707</sup>

There appear often in the sources of the epoch two chief *qagans* aided by four sub-*qagan* (four quarters of the world) distributed evenly east and west over the whole realm. The

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<sup>703</sup> KRADIN 2015: 23.

<sup>704</sup> GOLDEN 1982: 53.

<sup>705</sup> SINOR, KLYASHTORNY 1996: 332.

<sup>706</sup> GOLDEN 1982: 53.

<sup>707</sup> SINOR, KLYASHTORNY 1996: 332.

eastern *qagan*, however, was regarded as the supreme ruler, and as such he claimed the right for sovereignty over the ‘four quarters of the world’ (*tört bulun*, IE2), meaning all peoples of the Eurasian Steppe. In a letter to the Byzantine Emperor Mauricius from AD 600, the *qagan* presents his claims in Iranian cosmologic terms: ‘the *qagan*, the great autocrat of the seven tribes and the lord of the seven climes of the ecumene’.<sup>708</sup>

The direction east had also symbolic importance among the Türks. The fact is clearly stated in Chinese sources such as Zhou-shu, according to which the *qagan*’s *yurt* was facing east, because the Türks honored the direction whence the sun rises.<sup>709</sup> The same belief reflected in Türks’ predecessor Uyğur as well. Uyğur, the inscription of Šine Ušu shows an eastward orientation. The word “East” is *öng* ‘the front, the fore’.<sup>710</sup>

### 3.7. Succession of the throne

There was no direct father to son succession to the *qaganal* throne but rather elder brother to younger brothers, to brother’s nephew, etc., the various princes were assigned different administrative-military posts and functions, each of which had its own title. As a particular prince moved through the hierarchy, his titles changed. This was also true of the other officers of the state. Thus, titles such as *yabgu*, *šad*, *čor*, *tutuq*, *tudun*, *tarqan* etc.<sup>711</sup>

In theory, a Turko-Mongol elite had the right to determine who would inherit his rank, and usually, the eldest son was the favored choice. But it is evident that succession could be from elder brother to younger brother (the most common form, with eight cases), from father to son (three cases), from uncle to nephew (three cases), and from the first cousin to first cousin (in only one known case). The supreme *qagan* thus could be virtually any member of the ruling A-shi-na clan, which held charismatic authority over the Türks. Because of the ambiguity in the process of succession, violence sometimes accompanied the enthronement of a new *qagan*, particularly when power passed from one generation to next. Often the candidate with the most power emerged as the next supreme *qagan*.<sup>712</sup>

Nevertheless, the reigning *qagan* sometimes was able to designate his successor, who was not always his son, as can be seen in the story of the successor of Išbara Qagan (580-587). Fearing that his son Yongyulü was “of a timid nature” Išbara ordered that his younger brother Chu-luo-hou (also known as Yabgu Qagan) should succeed him.<sup>713</sup>

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<sup>708</sup> PRITSAK 1988: 754.

<sup>709</sup> SINOR 1997a: 147.

<sup>710</sup> SINOR 1997a: 148.

<sup>711</sup> GOLDEN 1982: 52.

<sup>712</sup> DROMPP 1989: 95.

<sup>713</sup> DROMPP 1989: 95.

This curious tale, which smacks more of Chinese than those of the Türks, makes it clear that the rules of succession were not rigidly fixed and suggests that a supreme *qagan* could indicate his chosen successor prior to his death. Bumin is believed to have had five sons, three of whom became supreme *qagan* in succession: Kara (Ke-luo, 552-553). Mukan (553-572), and Taspar (Ta-bo or Tuo-bo, 572-580). It is not known if Bumin gave any of these sons to the title of *qagan* prior to his death, but this does not seem to have been the case.<sup>714</sup>

Some political groups or the *qurultai* attempted to choose the new *qagan*. A recently deceased *qagan*'s wishes often were ignored in favor of tanistry in which "the most talented male member of the royal clan should inherit the throne, commonly by murder and war".<sup>715</sup> In some cases, a peaceful consensus was achieved among the leading candidates and tribal leaders, but when negotiations failed, the ensuing bloody conflicts ranged from assassinations to large-scale warfare. In order to ascend to the pinnacle of power, Turko-Mongol *qagans* typically required a core group of dedicated clients and an expanding network of freshly recruited adherents capable of intimidating or defeating rivals.<sup>716</sup> Success in this turbulent political game demanded that the patron propagate personal charisma based on bravery, physical vigor, mental acuity, and elite status.<sup>717</sup>

Once in power, the leader had to be constantly vigilant of challengers who might arise from his lineage. One case is instructive from the First Türk Empire. After the Türk dynastic founder A-shi-na Bumin's death, rule passed laterally by consensus among three of his sons. However, after the death of the third son, Taspar (Tuobo) Qagan (r. 572-81), a succession struggle broke out among Bumin's grandsons. One son of each of the three previous *qagans* vied for power, apparently at a *qurultai* (tribal council to determine succession). Taspar had designated his son, An-luo, as heir. However, a cousin was proclaimed Išbara Qagan (r. 581-7) allegedly because he was tall, brave, and noblest of the sons of the previous *qagans*. An-luo apparently persisted in claiming to be the legitimate successor reigning as Umna Qagan, though the Chinese sources say he was a secondary *qagan*. The Western Türks, who supported the third claimant, refused to recognize Išbara or An-luo, irrevocably splitting the empire into halves. With Sui Dynasty aid, Išbara began to attack the Western Türks, but he proved unable to reunite the empire. Despite Išbara's personal charisma, he was not able to overcome the jealousy of his cousins and their supporters. The result of these disputes over power was a substantial

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<sup>714</sup> DROMPP 1989: 95-96.

<sup>715</sup> FLETCHER 1979/1980: 239.

<sup>716</sup> GOLDEN 1982: 50; SINOR, KLYASHTORNY 1996: 336-7.

<sup>717</sup> SKAFF 2012: 78.

weakening of Türk power. The uncertainty of succession meant that Türk leaders had to seek the support of clients and be constantly vigilant against internal threats.<sup>718</sup>

Many of the subordinate qagans had regional affiliations. Di-tou, Išbara, and the second Tuli (who held the title of subordinate qagan under Xieli Qagan) were all clearly associated with the eastern part of the realm; Böri and Che-bi were associated with the western part – but not the far west, which was apparently under the control of Ištemi and, later Tardu, the first Tuli (who held his title under Du-lan Qagan) was associated with the northern part. These affiliations were clearly assigned by the supreme qagan in only a few cases. In a nomadic confederation of this sort, it is evident that each leader would have his own people and his own territory in which they lived and nomadized under normal circumstances. Šads also had territorial affiliations.

In most cases we do not know the titles which the subordinate qagans held prior to their elevations to this position; most of them, as sons of previous supreme qagans, must have been tegins at least. Three (Yabgu/Chu-luo-hou Qagan, the second Tuli Qagan, and Sha-po-luo), and possibly a fourth (Nibar/She-tu/Išbara, on the basis, that his regnal title contained the element apparently both a *šad* and a *yabgu*. Du-lan held the title of *yabgu*.

Several subordinate qagans eventually became a serious rival of the supreme qagans, sometimes to the point of military confrontation.

Four of the subordinate qagans later became supreme qagans. Of these, Nibar/She-tu/Išbara succeeded his uncle, Yabgu/Chu/luo-hou succeeded his elder brother, Tuli/Qi-min succeeded his paternal first cousin (senior line), and Fu-ju briefly succeeded his father Qapghan. It is clear that the familial relationships between the supreme qagans and their successors were also varied.

Although the sources are far from complete, it appears that only two subordinate qagans were actually designated by the reigning supreme qagan as his successor to the throne of the Eastern Türk Empire. Yabgu/Chu-luo-hou was chosen by his elder brother Išbara because of the “timed nature” of Išbara’s own son Yongyülü.<sup>719</sup>

### **3.8. Postal service**

Postal systems were almost always the speediest method of communication available meant that they were the most effective way of transmitting important information or intelligence reports from afar. Indeed, any history of intelligence systems almost inevitably becomes a history of postal systems. Postal systems were governmental institutions. Also, the

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<sup>718</sup> SKAFF 2012: 79.

<sup>719</sup> DROMPP 1989: 105-106.

efficiency of the postal system depended on safety along the routes and a well-organized network of relay-stations. Almost every imperial building needed a postal or communication system, and they named it in different terms such as Byzantine – *veredus* (post-horse) in Latin, Roman – *publicus*, Pre-Islam, Iran and Arab – *al-barid*.<sup>720</sup> Though we don't have clear evidence related to the term used for the postal service by the Türks, the terms *ulag*, *savči* and *elči* must have used according to some data.

The oldest word '*ulag*' of Turkic post office used by the Türks for the 'equestrian communication officer' took its place in *Dîwân Lughat at-Turk*, which was written by Kashgari.<sup>721</sup> On the other hand Clauson explains the word *ulag* as follows: "a technical term for a horse used for carrying goods or riding, more particularly a horse for hire and a post horse."<sup>722</sup>

News delivery and messenger system in horse ranges established by the state is a system that is also seen and implemented in the Türk State. Xuan Zang, the famous Buddhist priest, and traveller who went to India through the West Türk State in 629, heard and wrote the word '*ulag*' in his book. For unknown reason, the word *ulag* is not mentioned in Turkic runic inscriptions, it is recorded frequently in Turkic sources after the 11<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>723</sup>

Two separate systems were established in the Türk Qaganate that provides internal and external communication. Communication within the borders of the country was provided by messengers called *savči*,<sup>724</sup> while the external communication task was carried out by the envoys called *elči*. Letters sent by the Türk qagans to the Chinese Emperors were mentioned in the Chinese archives.

Some pieces of information about messengers for the Türk Qaganate period can be found in Orkhon Inscriptions. On the 9<sup>th</sup> line of the southern side of the Tonyuquq Inscription, the spy sent by the Toquz Oguz to the Türks is mentioned,<sup>725</sup> while Tonyuquq is talking about the watchtowers in the 3<sup>rd</sup> line of the 2<sup>nd</sup> stone of the east face.<sup>726</sup> Tonyuquq also talks about the messenger in the 8<sup>th</sup> line of the north face of the inscription.<sup>727</sup>

Contemporary written sources of the Türk period are limited. We can access some information about the postal system of the Toquz Oguz, which formerly constituted the eastern

<sup>720</sup> SILVERSTEIN 2007: 1-2, 29,53.

<sup>721</sup> KASHGARI 1939, I, 122; For more information about *ulag* please see: DİLÇİN 1983: 218.

<sup>722</sup> CLAUSON 1972: 136.

<sup>723</sup> ÖGEL 1978: 357.

<sup>724</sup> "Normally messenger and so a less distinguished term than *yalavač*." (CLAUSON 1972: 785).

<sup>725</sup> T Ins. S 9; TEKİN 1967: 285.

<sup>726</sup> T Ins. E 2-3; TEKİN 1967: 289.

<sup>727</sup> T Ins. K 8; TEKİN 1967: 287.

branch of the Türk Qaganate, from Mulim sources. Firstly, take a look at some notes on the docked tail practice that mentioned in the sources. Arabic sources for the pre-Islamic Iranian *barid* suggest that postal mounts had docked tails as an outward sign of their postal status, and in the Islamic period there are references both to dock tailed and to lean *barid* mounts. Although many Arabic sources insist that tail-docking was introduced as a means of distinguishing postal mounts from ordinary ones (thereby discouraging would-be highway robbers from attacking couriers), it seems that this modification was expected to make the mounts more efficient. The practice is said to have been adopted from Turkic soldiers, as al-Baladhuri writes: “In the country of al-Qiqan al-Muhallab met with eighteen Türk knights, riding horses with docked tails. They attacked him but were all killed. Al-Muhallab said, ‘How much more expeditious in maneuvering these barbarians were than we!’ In consequence, he had the tails of his own horses docked, being the first Muslim to do such a thing.”<sup>728</sup>

Another note from the Arab sources mention the speed of the Turkic postal service and the postal stations of the Toquz Oguz. It is worth mentioning that although the postal itineraries provided in Arabic geographical works are almost always confined to the lands of Islam, the postal systems of neighbouring states were, on occasion, also available to Muslims traveling in official capacities. Tamim ibn Bahr’s journey through Central Asia ca. 821 to the *qagan* of the Toquz Oguz was achieved by riding the Turkic *barid*. According to Ibn al-Faqih’s version of the travel-account: “[Tamim] journeyed... via the *barid* on which the Qagan sent him... he was traveling through three stations (*sikak*) in a day and a night, traveling as hard and as fast as he could. He journeyed twenty days in steppes where there were springs and grass but no villages or towns. Only the station-masters living in tents.”<sup>729</sup> Using the Turkic *barid* reduced a fifteen-day journey to three days. As a last note from the Arab sources, during the Arab conquest in Central Asia, in the 9<sup>th</sup> century, high-ranking Türks would occasionally hold the Postmaster-General position of the caliphate.<sup>730</sup>

The Mongols, one of the most important nomad empires in history, also used a developed postal service called *yam*.<sup>731</sup> The Mongols called, the officers who served as posters were given names such as *yamči*, while the horses allocated for postal services were called *ulag*.

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<sup>728</sup> SILVERSTEIN 2007: 68-69.

<sup>729</sup> SILVERSTEIN 2007: 97-98.

<sup>730</sup> SILVERSTEIN 2007: 108.

<sup>731</sup> The term is generally agreed to have been adopted from the Chinese *Yi* (or *Li*) system of communication. On the other hand, Clauson claims that the term *yam* is explained as an early loanword in Mongolian, probably direct from Chinese *cham*. (CLAUSON 1972: 933.) However, the term *yam* is attested in an eighth-century Judeo-Persian document from Central Asia, with the meaning of ‘postal courier’. This indicates that the word entered Inner Asian vocabulary centuries before the Mongols are said to have adopted the Chinese *Yi* and the term *yam*. (SILVERSTEIN 2007: 142-143.)

The postal organization was probably introduced to Chinggis Khan through the Uygur and Khitan advisors who had a formative influence on the development of Mongol bureaucratic practices and institutions.<sup>732</sup>

Before concluding I would like to touch on a subject. Iranians used postal services that date back ancient times from the Achaemenids (6<sup>th</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> centuries BC) to the Sassanids (AD 3<sup>rd</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> centuries).<sup>733</sup> The postal system may have passed from Iranians to Sogdians and then to the Türks via their trader and administrator fellows. Because the Sogdians played a very important role in the administrative affairs of the Türks. In addition, we know from written sources that the Sogdians delivered letters of the Türks to Constantinople and China and that they served as ambassadors. Sogdians, who know the route and post station order well from their historical background, may have contributed to the postal service of the Türks.

To sum up, the road and communication system has been of great importance in terms of communication and transportation for all states throughout history. The message system was very vital for nomads, especially those living in the vast steppes. The survival of the states was possible with the good functioning of the postal organization. And the same is true for the Türk Qaganate. Based on clues from some historical sources the Türks used postal service. Their correspondence with their settled neighbours can be considered as proof. Thanks to their horsemen, they provided a fast exchange of information. Based on Muslim sources written in the following centuries, we can guess that the Türks set up mobile postal stations from *yurts*. The postal system of the Türk Qaganate was rather a military institution. This was also necessary for the safety of the steppe postal routes.

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<sup>732</sup> PARMAKSIZOĞLU 1983: 498; VÉR 2019.

<sup>733</sup> SILVERSTEIN 2007: 7-29.



## **CHAPTER V**

### **RELATIONS AND POLICIES**

#### **1. TRANSBOUNDARY RELATIONS**

As a powerful state, Türk Qaganate extended its relations with several empires and regions. Its relations with China, an agrarian civilization was of crucial importance. The relations between these two states were complicated. They developed different policies to maintain peace and balance of power between them. In addition, the Türks got in touch with several kingdoms ranging from Koreans to the Franks. It was another difficult task to keep the allied nomadic tribes and tribal confederations in peace, as they tended to be often rebellious. In order to control the nomad societies and maintain peace with settled states, sometimes violence and sometimes diplomatic and trade contacts were used. Continuing its existence for about two centuries, Türk Qaganate has developed different policies in both internal affairs and foreign relations.

##### **1.1. Türk - China relations**

##### **1.1.1. Aim of the campaigns against China**

Possibly the most intriguing question in the history of the Great Steppe is the motive that drove nomads to mass migrations and destructive campaigns against agricultural civilizations. There have been a great many diverse opinions to solve this problem. According to Kradin these opinions might be classified as follows:

- (1) diverse global climatic changes
- (2) the warlike and greedy nature of nomads,
- (3) overpopulation of the steppe;
- (4) growth of productive forces and class struggle, weakening of the agricultural societies in consequence of feudal division;
- (5) the need to replenish an extensive cattle-breeding economy by means of raids on more stable agricultural societies;
- (6) unwillingness on the side of the settled peoples to trade with nomads (the cattle breeders had nowhere to sell their surplus products);
- (7) personal property of rulers of the steppe societies;
- (8) groups identity.<sup>734</sup>

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<sup>734</sup> KRADIN 2015: 22.

It seems clear that the Türks and Uygurs never intended, nor attempted, to conquer and hold Chinese lands beyond the contested regions of the frontier. Their attacks typically had different purposes. Some were raids to extract both wealth and expertise from the frontier regions of North China, often in the form of animals and humans.

Other attacks and military maneuvers are clearly identifiable as imperial efforts to exert influence over the political life of the frontier zone, often with the intention of destabilizing (or maintaining the destabilization of) North China. One of the clearest examples of this is the Türk role during the transition from the Sui Dynasty (581-618) to the Tang (618-907) when the Türk ruler Shibi Qagan (r. 609-619) backed several Chinese rivals for the throne, giving them Turkic titles, flags, and troops to advance their causes.<sup>735</sup> (Table 2)

Medieval diplomatic agreements, over terms such as investiture, marriage, and trade, were consciously calibrated and recalibrated to reflect the prevailing strength of various parties in a multilateral geopolitical arena. Military aggression served not only as a means of obtaining territory or plunder but also as a negotiating tactic to gain a more favorable agreement in diplomatic negotiations.<sup>736</sup>

### **1.1.2. Peace in the war**

There was another side of the war. Türk and Chinese relations were not just about fierce wars. Sources show us the presence of sometimes generous relationships, even in war. Generals who were wounded in the line of duty received benevolent attention from emperors. In 645, when Taizong personally led troops in an unsuccessful attempt to conquer Koguryō, two Turkic generals were injured. When Qibi Heli (677) suffered a wound at the waist, Taizong personally tended to the gash. Even more dramatically, an arrow hit a Türk, A-shi-na Si-mo, and Taizong personally sucked out “poisoned blood”. More than half a century later in 698, Zhang Renyuan, a Han Chinese general, was wounded while repelling a Türk attack. Empress Wu was not on the scene but sent a personal messenger to deliver medication.<sup>737</sup>

### **1.1.3. Chinese citizens of the Türk Qaganate**

It is known that many Chinese were entering Türk territory in captivity or in exile. In the early stage of the First Empire, the internal situation was unstable, but in the period of the last three qagans of Shibi (609-619), Chu-luo (619-620), and Xieli (620-630), the prestige of qagans was on the rise, and consequently, political unity was strengthened. This period paralleled the turbulent times of the end of the Sui Dynasty and the beginning of the Tang

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<sup>735</sup> DROMPP 2015: 439.

<sup>736</sup> SKAFF 2012: 18.

<sup>737</sup> SKAFF 2012: 95.

Dynasty in China, which situation promoted the influx of Chinese people into the Turkic territory. The Chinese went spontaneously into the Türk territory to seek refuge or to make use of the latter's power. Furthermore, many Chinese had been taken away by the Türks.<sup>738</sup>

In 622 Xieli attacked Bing-zhou, dispatched other troops to enter into Fengzhou, Lu-zhou-mi, and other prefectures, and to take more than 5000 men and women away. A famous monk Xuanzang left the capital Chang-an in August 629, crossed the Tianshan Mountains in the following spring, and reached the Talas Basin, where he found a Chinese village. Its inhabitants, who had been captured by the Türks gathered to settle down there. Furthermore, in 631, the Chinese government compensated the captured Chinese with gold and silk, whose number was counted to 80.000.<sup>739</sup>

According to the Chinese source, there is a little isolated town near Talas with 300 or so households. Its inhabitants are of Chinese origin. They were taken away by the Türks and then came together to this town. They were assimilated into the Türks in dwelling, clothes, and behavior, but have kept their original language and courtesy.<sup>740</sup> These Chinese were probably engaged in agriculture as well as in administration and handicrafts.

#### **1.1.4. Türks in China**

In August of the first year of Shengli (698) Mochuo sent a note and reproached the Court saying, "The Tang Court gave us boiled seeds, but after sowing they did not germinate... On these grounds, I mobilize my troops to occupy the territory north of Yellow River."<sup>741</sup> This statement shows that Kapgan aimed at occupying not only the land of Chan-yu Duhufu, but the whole territory north of the Yellow River including Fengzhou. In September of this year, Kapgan took away an enormous number of people. Those captured people may have been engaged in agriculture in the occupied zone.<sup>742</sup>

There were to be found the Black Sand Steppe (Old Turkic Karakum, in Chinese Hei-sha); the Čogay yiš, called also Čogay Quzi, (in Chinese Yinshan); and the Kök-Öñ (= Ongin) River (Chinese Hun-yi). There, along the Chinese limes were located Old Turkic strongholds from which they launched their attacks against the Chinese towns, especially in 682-687.<sup>743</sup>

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<sup>738</sup> HAYASHI 1990: 137.

<sup>739</sup> HAYASHI 1990: 138-139.

<sup>740</sup> HAYASHI 1990: 140.

<sup>741</sup> MAU-TSAI 1958 II: 603.

<sup>742</sup> HAYASHI 1990: 150.

<sup>743</sup> PRITSAK 1988: 773.

But in Ordos were also settled the co-owners of the Türk Empire, the Sogdian Sir (Chinese Hu; they lived in their ‘six Sogdian districts’ and were involved mainly in trade with China.<sup>744</sup>

Attitudes of the Tang elite toward Turkic-Mongols speaking nomads continued to show divisions. Members of north-eastern and southern eminent lineages were scandalized that the government-sponsored genealogies of the social elite issued in 659 and 714 included barbarians and military officers who had gained recognition for service rendered to the dynasty. In one passage, Tang military officer Li Jing allegedly was answering the emperor’s question about the dispensation of Han and foreign (fan) troops in a newly established district for the Western Türks in 649: “When Heaven gave birth to men, originally there was no distinction of foreign and Han. But their territory is distant, wild, and desert-like, and they must rely on archery and hunting to live. Thus, they are constantly practicing fighting and warfare. If we are generous to them, show good faith, pacify them, and fully supply them with clothes and food, then they will all be men of the Han.”<sup>745</sup>

Finally, substantial numbers of pastoral nomads lived in Inner Mongolia and the Hexi corridor, usually falling under the suzerainty of other powers based in China, Mongolia, or Tibet. Under the Tang rule, 30,000 households of Türks lived in Western Inner Mongolia in 641. Their population totaled over 100,000 people, including 40,000 troops and 90,000 horses. The number of cavalry soldiers that this region could supply was perhaps only a fifth of Mongolia. Nonetheless, these and other pastoral nomads played important roles in the Sui-Tang empires.<sup>746</sup>

#### **1.1.5. Traces of the Türks in China**

Taizong’s tomb complex called Zhaoling, which also included many officials who served Gaozong, including those of Türk background, played a prominent role. Military men received 64 of the 167 satellite burials (38.6%). Almost a quarter of the officers were of clear foreign origins. A-shi-na Si-mo the Türk general, who died from his wounds in the battle against Koguryō, received posthumous rewards of a tomb at Zhaoling and a memorial stele. Also buried at Zhaoling were five of Si-mo’s clansmen--including A-shi-na She-er and A-shi-na Zhong--and the Tiele chief, Qibi Heli. A-shi-na She-er and Qibi Heli were particularly devoted to Taizong, and after the emperor died in 649, they requested to commit suicide to accompany their lord in death, but the newly enthroned emperor Gaozong denied their appeals. The suicide

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<sup>744</sup> PRITSAK 1988: 773-774.

<sup>745</sup> SKAFF 2012: 59.

<sup>746</sup> SKAFF 2012: 39.

of close followers after the death of a master apparently was a nomad custom. Instead of A-shi-na She-er and Qibi Heli killing themselves, they received accompanying tombs at Zhaoling after dying naturally. A-shi-na Zhong's tomb has been excavated, but it was almost empty because of looting. All of these generals began their careers as a member of the Türk elites on the steppe, later became important members of the Tang military, and won important victories mainly in Inner Asia. They gave their allegiances to their patrons, Taizong and Gaozong, and their ultimate rewards were accompanying burials. The political family, like the Tang patrimonial realm, was militant and multi-ethnic.<sup>747</sup>

Tang emperors later created more public displays of sculpture at imperial tombs that emphasized the physical and ritual inclusion of foreigners in the empire. During Taizong's funeral in 649, Gaozong exercised imperial prerogative by ordering sculptors to fashion statues of fourteen barbarian monarchs and chiefs who had been captured in battle or voluntarily submitted to his deceased father. The statues of the foreign chieftains in Qianling are arranged in two groups of originally 32 statues, each composed of four rows with eight statues, to the east and to the west of the passageway. Originally every statue of these foreign chieftains bore an inscription on its back giving the name and titles of the depicted person; however, this inscription has long disappeared from this particular statue.<sup>748</sup> Most are Inner Asians, including Türk tribal leaders and kings of oasis states. Subsequently, barbarian sculptures were added to the Qianling, the tomb complex of Gaozong and Empress Wu after her death in 705. Zhongzong apparently decided to add sixty-four life-size statues of foreign elites in two orderly contingents flanking the processional path leading to the main southern gate of the tumulus. Sixty-one headless sculptures survive, but although each statue originally had a name and title engraved on it, only thirty-six still can be identified. The inclusion of the statues has been the subject of much debate, including speculation that is related to the Turkic practice of placing a line of stones at a warrior's tomb representing slain enemies. Based on the identities of the individuals represented in stone, none were foreigners killed in battle and only a few were war captives. Figuratively, they might be considered mourners, but not literally because some predeceased Taizong, Gaozong, and/or Empress Wu or never visited the Tang court. Although the majority of statues depict Inner Asians and especially nomad peoples, the only common denominator is that they represent foreigners or elites of foreign ancestry, including loyal military officers, bridge officials, rulers who had accepted Tang investiture, and ambassadors from the independent Tibetan and the Second Türk Empires. Spiritually, the statues were an innovation

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<sup>747</sup> SKAFF 2012: 97.

<sup>748</sup> STARK 2009: 123.

in keeping with neither Türk nor Chinese customs. The only possible audiences for the statues were Tang officials, imperial lineage members, and foreign diplomats attending rituals at the tombs because the imperial tomb complexes were surrounded by walls and monitored by guards.<sup>749</sup>

A statue that can be attributed to a Western Türk Qagan, that of Xiao Hongnashai, in the Tekes valley (Ili Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture, Xinjiang) shows very similar features to those statues in China. It is assumed that the statue itself represents an image of this little known western Qagan who died shortly before or after 600 CE.<sup>750</sup> (Figure 26-27)

## **1.2. Türk - Iran relations**

Historical records of political contacts with the contemporary Türk Qaganate, the Sassanid Empire was found since 545. Bumin Qagan, who founded the Türk State in 552, became a neighbour to the Sassanids after having taken over the Seyhun region in 555 and entered into political and military relations with this state.

After few years of the foundation of the Türk Qaganate, the Sassanid Persia made an alliance with the Türks against the Hephthalite Empire and they together defeated it (561-562). According to Felföldi's study based on Menander Protector's reports, the Sassanid-Türk alliance was achieved through a member of Hephthalite nobility named Katluph who left the Hephthalites and first joined to the Türks and soon after went to Sassanids and became an important adviser of the state.<sup>751</sup>

The Türk State, which became the biggest power of Central Asia with Mukan Qagan, entered into a struggle with the Sassanid State for domination of the Silk Road starting from China and going to Constantinople, the capital of Byzantium. Sassanid ruler Anushirvan started the period of political and military relations with the western wing ruler İstemi Yabgu, of the Türks.<sup>752</sup> Both states did not want to be deprived of revenues from trade with Byzantine in the west.

The Türks seized the northern trade routes of the Sassanids and deprived them of a large source of income. The cities of the Sogds, which were the centers of trade and directed the commercial caravans, came out of Sassanid domination. Thus, a large source of income was lost. The Sassanids' goal was not only to keep the Silk Road under control, but to deprive Byzantine of trade goods from the east. After the capture of the Sogdian regions, some

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<sup>749</sup> SKAFF 2012: 142-144.

<sup>750</sup> STARK 2009: 121.

<sup>751</sup> FELFÖLDI 2001: 191-202.

<sup>752</sup> KAFESOĞLU 2000: 95.

statesmen recommended the qagan to give up an alliance with the Sassanid State and agree with Byzantium.<sup>753</sup>

The Persians bought the merchandise from the Sogdian traders of the Türk embassy and burnt it in a public place, not very subtle, yet a harmless indication of the Persians' reluctance to take up trade with the Türks. Undaunted, possibly egged on by the Sogdians, the Türks sent a second mission whose members, however, succumbed to the rigors - or so the Persians claimed - of the hot climate to which they were not accustomed. No retaliatory actions seem to have followed; clearly, the second mission, composed of merchants, was not considered diplomatic.<sup>754</sup>

After this Türk-Iran tension, İstemi Yabgu's political initiative yielded results, and the Sassanid-Byzantine war started. İstemi Yabgu dragged two rival states into war with the politics he followed. The Sassanid-Byzantine War started in 572. This policy led by the Türks ensured that the Sassanid State defeated Byzantium. Thanks to the politics pursued by the Türks, the northern sides of the Caucasus became entirely under Türk domination between 567-571, and they became neighbours with Byzantium.<sup>755</sup>

### **1.3. Türk - Byzantine relations**

Türks' political interest reached the other edge of the Eurasian steppes to the Byzantine Empire. Exchanges of gifts and diplomatic letters were normal aspects of interstate relations in medieval Eurasia. For example, in 568, the Türk ruler, İstemi Qagan, sent an embassy of Sogdians and Türks to the Byzantine emperor Justinos to discuss an alliance against Sassanid Iran. The Byzantine historian, Menander, noted that during their audience with Justinos, İstemi's envoys "did everything according to the law of friendship," including handing over gifts of valuable raw silk and a diplomatic letter "written in Scythian" that was read by an interpreter.<sup>756</sup> A Sogdian merchant, Maniakh was the first to represent any real Turkic ruler, in this case İstemi, the brother of Bumin. Maniakh might have offered an alliance against the Persians, with whom the Empire had been entangled in a long and unsuccessful war after the accession of Justinos II, and also against the Avars who, entering the Carpathian Basin in the same year, threatened some territories of Byzantine. Another point that an agreement could be reached about was undoubtedly the silk-trade, the cause of the original conflict between the

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<sup>753</sup> KARADENİZ 2011: 209-211.

<sup>754</sup> SINOR 1997b: 342.

<sup>755</sup> KARADENİZ 2011: 212.

<sup>756</sup> SKAFF 2012: 148-149.

Türks and the Sassanid Empire. Silk and silk-trade was a matter of utmost importance for the Byzantines.<sup>757</sup>

It was Zemarchus who accompanying Maniakh on his way back, paid honour to İstemi, the ruler of the Western Türks. This choice clearly shows the extreme importance of these new allies for Constantinople. Zemarchus was the first Roman to penetrate the deserts of Inner Asia so deeply. According to Menander, they set out on their journey in August 569, and returned a year later. The Byzantine envoy met the Western ruler of the Türks at his (perhaps summer) residence on a mountain called Ektag, or 'Golden Mountain' in Greek, probably somewhere in the Altai ranges.<sup>758</sup>

Upon his arrival, Zemarchus presented gifts to İstemi, "as was the custom". Later, when part of Zemarchus' retinue departed, İstemi gave them gifts in return. Even though the two powers lacked previous contacts, their meetings went smoothly in part because they shared some ideas about diplomatic protocol, particularly gift and correspondence exchanges, which were customary elements of diplomatic relations.<sup>759</sup>

In order to join the Türk campaign against the Persians, Zemarchus followed the ruler to Talas, which might have been his winter residence. However, things took a different turn. While in Talas, İstemi received another embassy, that of the Persian King. During the negotiations and the reception İstemi expressed his disfavour towards them. They were seated to a place lower than the place of the Byzantine envoys and they must have endured all the reproaches of the Türk ruler. Finally, they could not stand it and they argued back and refused İstemi's accusations. With it all the negotiations came to an end, and İstemi finally turned back to his former allies.

Zemarchus and his companions returned after two years. Zemarchus was accompanied home by a new ambassador who held the title *Tagma Tarqan*. The son of Maniakh, who was very young at that time, was also a member of the new Türk embassy and he ranked immediately after the leader.<sup>760</sup>

Diplomatic relations between Constantinople and the Türks were quite frequent: between 568 and 576 we know five of Roman embassies to Türk rulers. The last of these, led by an experienced diplomat called Valentinus, then on his second mission to the Türks, was sent to inform them of the accession of Tiberius II to the dignity of co-emperor with Justinos

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<sup>757</sup> DOBROVITS 2011: 382-383.

<sup>758</sup> DOBROVITS 2011: 384.

<sup>759</sup> SKAFF 2012: 148-149.

<sup>760</sup> DOBROVITS 2011: 390.



II, and also to strengthen the anti-Persian alliance which, for some time, had been at the center of Türk-Byzantine foreign policy. The Türk ruler Silziboulos (Ištemi) had just died, and his son and successor Turxath (Türk Šad) received the Roman emissaries, who expected a friendly reception with an outburst of rage which bode ill not only for the success of the mission but for the very lives of the diplomats. Reproaching them with their alleged duplicity, as manifested by the Romans' offering asylum to the Avars whom Turxath considered his fugitive slaves, he vowed to put them all to death without further ado. The Türks, so he said, were not accustomed to dealing with liars. Valentinus had a difficult time extricating himself and his companions from this dangerous situation. He argued that Turxath, who had inherited his father's land, had also become heir to his foreign policy, and should not jeopardize in a fit of ill-temper the alliance freely entered upon by Ištemi. But - and this was the brunt of his speech as recorded by Menander- it was even more important that he abides by the rule which guarantees the personal safety of the ambassadors. Though he, Valentinus, would rather die than hear his emperor called a liar, he could not but be horrified at the thought of how Turxath would be judged by the whole world, were he to lay hands on the Roman emissaries. Valentinus lived to tell the tale, so it is clear that his arguments carried considerable weight with the irate Turxath.

The distinction between diplomatic and commercial envoys (who may have been simple tradesmen) was not always easy to perceive, but it is safe to assume that those who sent them on their perilous mission were quite aware of the purpose they were to serve. The latter were not protected by the immunity accorded to the former. Around 568 a Türk mission led by the Sogdian Maniakh, and consisting mainly of Sogdian tradesmen, travelled to Persia with a view to establishing there a basis for the silk trade.<sup>761</sup>

If at least in theory, and usually also in practice, the lives of ambassadors were safe, these ambassadors could be harassed in many ways and had on occasion to endure considerable verbal abuse. The insults hurled at Valentinus by the Turxath. In 569, at a banquet at which Byzantine ambassador was entertained by Ištemi, the Türk ruler vented his anger at the Persian ambassador who was also present. In such circumstances, it was apparently possible for the diplomat to put up a spirited defense and, in the case here mentioned, something of a shouting match took place between Ištemi and his Persian guest. How far such an altercation could have gone depending on the circumstances and, let us face it, also on the courage or temper of the ambassador. On occasion, the diplomat could go beyond what was acceptable to his host.<sup>762</sup>

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<sup>761</sup> SINOR 1997b: 341-342.

<sup>762</sup> SINOR 1997b: 346, 347.

Particularly painful were the obligations of those attending the funerals of a defunct prince. Valentinus and members of his party, who reached the Türks shortly after İštemi's death, were required to lacerate their faces, a general Inner Asian sign of mourning. The same gesture was expected from the Chinese ambassador attending the funeral in 572 of another Türk ruler, Mukan. He obstinately refused to submit himself to this rite and the Türks, in deference to his diplomatic privileges, finally acquiesced.

The obligation for ambassadors to pass between fires is recorded by Menander in his description of Zemarchus' reception by İštemi. The existence of this custom is thus attested over a period of at least eight centuries and shows the remarkable continuity of Inner Asian diplomatic ceremonial through time and space.<sup>763</sup>

Inner Asian diplomatic tradition favored the practice that any embassy on its way home should be accompanied by a counter-embassy. On his return from Constantinople, the aforementioned Türk delegation led by Maniakh was accompanied by a Byzantine delegation headed by Zemarchus who - because of Maniakh's death - traveled in the company of Tagma, head of the new Türk mission to Constantinople.

This system presented the undeniable advantage of facilitating the progress of the foreign embassy but, at the same time, it also reduced its freedom of movement and its possibility of acquiring information that the host country was unwilling to provide. In the torrent of reproaches heaped on Valentinus by Turxath, one concerned the Romans' habit of leading the Türk embassies across the Caucasus by pretending that there was no other, easier road to Byzantium.<sup>764</sup>

#### **1.4. Türk - Frank relations**

There are various pieces of information on the ethnonym *Turci* recorded by western authors in Latin sources. One of the earliest mentions of the Türks in Western Europe is the story of Fredegar chronicle on the origin of the Franks compiled around 613 and 624.

In a passage Fredegar mentions the Troian origin of the Türks as follows:

“Tradition confirms that there was a third tribe from the same origin, the Türks and that when the Franks in their travels and many battles crossed over and entered Europe, a group of them settled in the same place, above the bank of the river Danube between the ocean and Thrace. They elected from their midst a king named Torquotus from whom they got their name

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<sup>763</sup> SINOR 1997b: 348.

<sup>764</sup> SINOR 1997b: 352.

‘Türks’. The Franks, (...) since their numbers were diminished by Torquotus, when settled near the Rhine a small band remained.”<sup>765</sup>

There is another short passage:

“The remaining group of them, who stayed on the bank of Danube, elected a king from among themselves named Torcoth, after whom they were called ‘Türks’ and after Francio the others were called ‘Franks’.”

The story of course is fiction. But the Troian origin was important and surprising. There was a view that the name is deformed variant of Turxantos of the Byzantine sources, that is Türk šad, probably Tardu (ruled 575-603). Beckwith suggested that the name Torquotus is identical with a form *Turkwath* that is ‘Türk ruler’.<sup>766</sup> This etymology seems adequate. But the localization of these Türk is problematic. The Türks never conquered the middle or lower Danube region. There are 2 possible interpretations: 1) Turkic power almost extended to the lower Danube in 584 and 585. 2) Avar slaves of the Türks were meant who arrived in the Danube region.<sup>767</sup>

Probably the envoys of the Türks spread this view abroad, for example in Constantinople. It is quite possible that the Frank envoys of king Dagobert could have met Türks in Constantinople. They might have seen each other there, and the Franks must have learned that the Türks had occupied the Western Steppe and impinged on Thrace. This is the locale for the common Franco-Turkic origin story, which the Franks subsequently developed and added to their Troian migration legend. In any event, whether the Franks obtained their knowledge of the Türks directly or via the Byzantine Greeks, they must have gotten it orally, not from Greek written records and they later wrote down what they heard.<sup>768</sup>

Apart from the political and military relations with the larger states compared to the above, there were also relations with many states or communities such as Hephthalites, Avars, Tibet, Korea, whose details we could not reach deeply. Representatives of many states attending the funeral of Kül Tegin are mentioned.<sup>769</sup> This shows how effective the Türk state was in foreign relations and gained considerable respect.

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<sup>765</sup> POLGÁR 2011: 104.

<sup>766</sup> BECKWITH 2007: 5-11.

<sup>767</sup> POLGÁR 2011: 105.

<sup>768</sup> BECKWITH 2007: 8.

<sup>769</sup> “They thus passed away. As mourners and lamenters there came from the east, from where the sun rises, the representatives of the people of Bükli plain, the Chinese, the Tibetan, the Avar, the Byzantium, the Kirghiz, the Üč Quriqan, the Otuz-Tatar, the Khitan and the Tatabi... This many peoples came and mourned and lamented. So famous qagans were they.” KT E 4-5; TEKİN 1967: 264.

## 2. INTERNAL RELATIONS

The Türk Qaganate was the first state established by Turkic speaking tribes and it is regarded as the starting point of the history of Turkic speaking peoples. The Türk Qaganate existed for two hundred years and during its history, the state was built on the nomadic tribal system. The various Turkic speaking tribal confederations, under different names and organizations, played a dominant role in the history of the Türk Qaganate. Most of these tribal confederations survived the fall of the Türk Qaganate and formed new empires and states which played the main role in the migrations of the Eurasian Steppe.<sup>770</sup>

The number of the tribes of the Türks has been debated. There is a source to show a clue on this question. The Chinese epitaph of Princess Xianli Pijia (Bilge), the daughter of the Türk Kapgan/Mochuo Qagan (691–716) provides us with clear evidence of this situation. According to this source, the second husband of the Princess held the title “The Heavenly Born (*tianshangde* = *täñridä bolmis*) Wise (*pijia* = *Bilge*) *šad* (*sha*) Qagan of the Thirty Tribes (*sanshi xing tianshangde pijia sha kehan*)”. Dobrovits, improving Ceglédý’s, solution attempt, explains the thirty tribes as follows. The term Nine Surnames (*jiu xing*) really stands for the Toquz Oguz. No further emendation is needed. The eleven tribes of the Eastern Türks together with the nine tribes of the Toquz Oguz make up twenty. Adding to this amount the ten tribes of the Western Türks (*On Oq*) we get the thirty tribes (*xing*) we were looking for.<sup>771</sup> The main tribes that played a major role in the history of the Qaganate will be mentioned below.

### 2.1. Sogdians and their roles in the Qaganate

First contacts between Sogdians and Türks probably took place much further to the east, and that it was from their commercial bases in Gansu that the Sogdians gained a foothold among the Turkic-speaking peoples. With the conquest of Sogdiana by the Türk armies against the Hephthalites, in 560, a genuine Sogd-Türk fusion was officially created.<sup>772</sup> After that date, the Sogdians played important roles in politics, administration, trade, and even in the creation of the written language of the Türks.

The Sogd people can be considered one of the communities which take place an important role in Türk state. The Türks and Uygurs employed the strategy of use of foreign experts in a number of capacities, including diplomatic advisors and ambassadors. The most famous of these were the Sogdians, whose role in this capacity is well known. Indeed, the Sui minister Pei Ju (546-627) blamed the *hu* people – i.e., Sogdians – for any diplomatic skill

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<sup>770</sup> TAŞAĞIL 2007/2008: 242.

<sup>771</sup> CZEGLÉDY 1972: 275–281; DOBROVITS 2004c: 260.

<sup>772</sup> VAISSIÈRE 2005: 199-201.

practiced by the Türk Qaganate. According to him, the Türks were guided by the “cruel and cunning” (*jie xia*) Sogdians in the formulation of their policies.<sup>773</sup> Whether due to Sogdian influence or not, the Türks understood the importance of diplomacy from the very beginning of their rise to power. When the Türk leader Bumin was denied a marital connection with his Ruanruan overlord, he quickly sought another alliance through a marriage bond with the Western Wei state (535-556) of North China in 551; this was an act of insubordination that signaled his imminent revolt against the Ruanruan. Later, Bumin’s son Taspar Qagan (r. 572-581) acknowledged his manipulation of the two rival Tuoba emperors who ruled over North China and pointed to the advantages – both political and economic – that accrued to him from this strategy when he stated, “So long as my two ‘sons’ to the South remain filial, why should I fear?”<sup>774</sup>

There were settled dwellers of the Sogdians in the territories of the Türks.<sup>775</sup> They were probably engaged in agriculture, and their contribution to the economy of the Türk Qaganate must have been very little in this perspective.<sup>776</sup> To the Chinese, the Sogdians were the main merchants of the Türks. They played the role of counselors to the nomads and had a strong foothold in the economic and political life of the successive Türk Qaganate. The Sogdians were able to introduce themselves into a commercial activity of much greater size, between China, Byzantine, Iran, and Türks.<sup>777</sup> They traded various goods and most importantly silk between their settled neighbours and the Türks.

The Sogdian contributions to the Türk Empire were important. Chief among them was unquestionably writing. In fact, the Sogdian alphabet adapted progressively to Turkic phonology, was used throughout the history of the Türk and then Uyghur Empires to write Turkic texts, aside from a rather brief period of xenophobic reaction within the elites at the beginning of the 8<sup>th</sup> century, during which the runic alphabet was used. Moreover, the earliest texts of the Türk Empire were written in the Sogdian language beginning in the last quarter of the 6<sup>th</sup> century: so, it is with the Bugut inscription, the oldest known. At the very beginning of the Türk Qaganate, the Zhou-shu states “their writing resembles that of the *hu*”. Sogdian was one of the languages of the Türk chancellery: when in 568 a Türk embassy travelled to Constantinople,

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<sup>773</sup> At the beginning of the 7<sup>th</sup> century, the minister Pei Ju declared to the Chinese emperor: “The Tujue are of an honest and simple nature, and one could sow discord among them. But numerous *hu* live among them, all in the highest degree cruel and perspicacious, who instruct and guide them.” (MAU-TSAI 1958: 87; VAISSIÈRE 2005: 203.)

<sup>774</sup> DROMPP 2015: 439-440.

<sup>775</sup> HAYASHI 1990, 140.

<sup>776</sup> HAYASHI 1990: 141.

<sup>777</sup> VAISSIÈRE 2005: 209.

the missive was written in “Scythian letters” and was carried by a Sogdian ambassador, Maniakh.<sup>778</sup>

## 2.2. Four Tujue clans

Although the name Tujue first appears as the sole and main element of the Türk Qaganate we encounter more than one Tujue communities in the sources. These groups have basically taken different names depending on their geography and lifestyle.

In chapter 196B of Jiu Tang-shu dealing with Tibet mention is made of the White Clothed Türks (*Bai-fu Tujue*) apparently close to the Qarluks. Allied with the Tibetians, the White Clothed Türks in 789 attacked Bei-ting. Their relationship with the Uygurs is unclear but they certainly were not under their direct rule.

The Yellow Head Türks (*Huang-tou Tujue*) appear in Chang Liu-qin’s work together with the Mochuo Türks. The Yellow Head Shi-wei (*Huang-tou Shi-wei*), located to the East of the Türk Empire, in the north-eastern part of what is now Mongolia. In Chinese sources, the Shi-wei often appear as subjects of the Türks. So, it is quite possible that the terms Yellow Head Türks and Yellow Head Shi-wei refer to the same people. Liu Mau-Tsai connects the Yellow Head Türks with the Yellow Clan (*huang xing*) division of the Türgish, a people which also had a Black Clan division.<sup>779</sup>

The ox-hooved Türks (*Niu-ti Tujue*) appear in Hui Qiao’s account. They were a northern people living in a very cold country, they had human bodies but the feet of oxen. Tibetan manuscript speaks of a tribe called in Turkic (but rendered in Tibetan script) *Ud qadayliṅ*, i.e., Ox-footed, in which people have human bodies and feet of oxen. The Chinese and Tibetan texts show considerable overlap in content and thereby strengthen their trustworthiness. Some have expressed the view that under the term “ox hoof” skins must be understood.

In this section dealing with the Kirgiz (217B), the Tang-shu mentions the people of the Skiing Türks (*Mu-ma Tujue*). *Mu-ma* ‘wooden horse’ is the term by which medieval Chinese described the ski; it occurs in connection with a number of peoples and fairly detailed descriptions of the object exist. These Skiing Türks had three tribes, two of which have not yet been identified. The name of the third *Tu-po* is often mentioned as a component of various Turkic and non-Turkic speaking tribal confederations and it survived in the name of the Tuva Türks of the Altai regions who today speak Tuvin or Tofa (Karagass) and who have been thought of as Turkified Samoyeds. According to our text, the chiefs of the Skiing Türks bore

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<sup>778</sup> VAISSIÈRE 2005: 202-203.

<sup>779</sup> SINOR 1997a: 152-153.

the title of an *erkin*, well known from Turkic, and in transcription from Chinese sources. The assertion is a prime example of a priori assumptions concerning the way of life of Türk peoples in general.<sup>780</sup>

Three of the Türk groups - the Shan-yu, Ox-footed, and Skiing Türks - there is evidence to show that they were forest dwellers, maintaining themselves through fishing and hunting, and living outside the mainstream of the political turmoil of the Türk state.<sup>781</sup>

It can safely be stated that the population of this state included an important, non-Turkic speaking segments whose civilization left its imprint on that of the ruling class. In the 8<sup>th</sup> century at least, this class was Turkic speaking. It had strong, probably linguistic ties with some groups, such as the White Clothed or the Skiing Türks. These links were sufficiently perceptible from the Chinese perspective for them to group such peoples under the same Türk generic term, Türk. It is sure that not all the inhabitants of the Türk empire were Turkic speaking and that not all the Türks belonged to the ruling stratum of the Türk state.<sup>782</sup>

### 2.3. A-shi-na and A-shi-te tribes

According to the ethno-genetic legends, the Türks originated from the A-shi-na tribe. The state was ruled by the Begs (prince) of this tribe after independence was achieved and the state was established until it vanished from the historical scene in 744. At the same time, there was another famous tribe called A-shi-te, to which the famous chief minister Tonyuquq was related. This tribe appeared in the history of the Türk Qaganate in the 620s and contributed to the establishment of the Second Türk Qaganate. After the death of Tonyuquq (725), there is no further information about them.<sup>783</sup>

It is worth mentioning another important point about A-shi-na. We have only one description of the tribes of the Eastern Türks at our disposal, namely the one to be found in the Tang-hui-yao in which their *tamgas* and dwelling places were also fixed.<sup>784</sup> These were crucial pieces of information for the Chinese who were trading in horses with the nomads. The most interesting fact one can learn from these *tamgas* is that the *tamga* of the tribe A-shi-na is completely different from that of the charismatic dynastic clan A-shi-na. The *tamga* of the A-shi-na dynasty has its well-known shape of a mountain goat. The *tamga* of the A-shi-na tribe

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<sup>780</sup> SINOR 1997a: 153-154.

<sup>781</sup> SINOR 1994: 289.

<sup>782</sup> SINOR 1997a: 156,157.

<sup>783</sup> TAŞAĞIL 2007/2008: 242.

<sup>784</sup> MAU-TSAI 1958: 453-454.

resembles a horse-neck with mane, or perhaps a wolf-head. This also means that a clear differentiation between the dynasty and the tribe A-shi-na existed among the Eastern Türks.<sup>785</sup>

#### **2.4. Töles/Tiele**

The Türks proved to become great specialists as empire builders, but they were only a few and needed manpower. In AD 546 they defeated the true nomads called by the Chinese Tiele and succeeded in forcing those of them who nomadized in Mongolia to enter their Pax. According to the Chinese sources they amounted to 50,000 tents. Under the name of Toquz Oguz the Tiele of Mongolia became the basis of the new steppe empire.<sup>786</sup>

The Tiele, later reconfigured and called the Toquz Oguz ‘Nine Oguz’ and it was an important tribal union originally subject to the First Türk Empire. After participating in the successful revolt in Mongolia against the Türks in 627, the Tiele came under the authority of Zhenzhu Bilge Qagan of the Sir Tarduš. Subsequently, in 646, the Uyгур led a successful Tiele revolt against Sir Tarduš with Tang military assistance.<sup>787</sup>

The first reference to the Töles in the sources is a list of the general name of all the tribes. If we examine the earlier periods, the Dingling in the period of the Xiongnu Empire, and after them, the followers of Gao-che (third century AD), were the precursors of, or the same as the Töles. The general name of the tribes inhabiting the Central Asian steppes was Ting-ling, which transformed into Gao-che (Kangli) in the Ruanruan to Tabgach (To-ba/Wei) periods, and then became Töles around the same time as the Türks first appeared. In fact, the sections in the Sui-shu and Bei Shi contain the most information about this point. The position of Töles and their historical role is described in detail in these sources.

The Töles tribes are mentioned as living in six different regions. The distribution of tribes was realized from the east to the west. Kerulen, east of the Tola River, is referred to as the farthest region in the east and the farthest region in the west in the north of the Caucasus.

The Töles tribes were dependent on the Türks before 551. The year 627 was critical for the Eastern Türk State. In that year the administration of the state failed, and some tribes, mainly the Sir Tarduš, Bayirku, and Uyгур, rebelled. After that, the concept of the Töles tribes was not used again in known history. The tribes named in the list above started to be independently mentioned with the same names, or by various other names. The Töles name remained only as of the name of a small tribe that lived to the west of Lake Baikal into the

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<sup>785</sup> DOBROVITS 2004c: 258-259.

<sup>786</sup> PRITSAK 1988: 750-751.

<sup>787</sup> SKAFF 2012: 188-189.



Mongol period (Tooles) and survives even in the name of the Doolos tribe among the Kirgiz people and in Siberia to the present day.<sup>788</sup>

The founder, Bumin, took important steps on the way of independence by relying on his power, when he aligned a part of the fifty thousand families of the Töles tribes to himself, already, before the establishment of the State. The tribes formed the most important base point of the state at times when the central control of the state was very strong, they were affected instantly by the political disintegrations and caused the instabilities to be increased. Succession disputes, increasing taxes, and hostilities which were started unjustly, especially caused the rebellion of the tribes. On the other side, we see that the tribes caused trouble by being affected by the Chinese intrigues. They also caused the state to be destroyed in some periods, for instance, the Türk State was destroyed as a result of the common action of the Uygur, Basmil and Qarluq tribes.<sup>789</sup>

## 2.5. Tarduš

Two people were mentioned in the Orkhon Inscriptions and in Chinese sources as the rulers of the Tarduš people. The position of Tarduš Šad from the Qagan family was held by two persons who later became Qagans. Mochuo, the later Kapgan Qagan, and his nephew, the future Bilge Qagan.<sup>790</sup> The Tarduš was in fact the most powerful of the Töles tribes in the first half of the seventh century and played a very significant historical role. When the Eastern Türk State lost power, Tarduš became the strongest tribe of the eastern territories.<sup>791</sup>

## 2.6. On Oq

It was İstemi Qagan who organized the clans and tribes into the ‘Ten-Arrow people’. The rule over this political entity was reserved for his clan, even if the original military organization gradually turned into groups and the term ‘Ten Arrows’ became an ethnonym for the various tribal groups in the Western Tianshan and Semirechie. Legitimate rule over these groups was expressed in the title *On Oq Qagan* which remained associated with the A-shi-na clan also after their exit from the political stage in the area – while it was denied to the usurpers from Türgish tribes.<sup>792</sup>

It is common knowledge that the Western Türks consisted of ten tribes. But the Byzantine source states that there were 10 tribes of the Western Türks. Describing Valentinus’ travel in 576, Menander notes that Turxantos, who received the Byzantine ambassador and

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<sup>788</sup> TAŞAĞIL 2007/2008: 243-244.

<sup>789</sup> TAŞAĞIL 2007/2008: 247.

<sup>790</sup> DOBROVITS 2004: 157.

<sup>791</sup> TAŞAĞIL 2007/2008: 245.

<sup>792</sup> STARK 2006/2007: 170.

threatened with execution, was one of the lords of the Türks, divided into eight parts. On the other hand, Chinese sources Jiu Tang-shu and Xin Tang-shu noted 10 tribes. The Chinese sources mention the division of the then tribes as Tu-lu and Nu-shi-bi. Under the sub-tribal alliances, the eastern was called Tu-lu, and the western was Nu-shi-bi. In the new order, the tribal chiefs were also given new titles, the heads of the Tu-lu tribes were *çor*, and the heads of the Nu-shi-bi tribes were *erkin*.<sup>793</sup>

## 2.7. Türgish

The Türgish emerged from the eastern wing of the ten *On Oq* tribes by the start of the eighth century to become the new leader of the tribal union. They inhabited originally the territory around the Ili and Chu River valleys, which presently are divided among northern Kirgizstan, south-eastern Kazakhstan, and north-western Xinjiang. The background of the Türgish rise was the chaotic state of the Western Türks in the last three decades of the seventh century.<sup>794</sup>

The Türgish was a tribe that had been appeared in the historical scene during new tribal organizations as a result of the different political situations in the Western Türk State after 635. It is understood from later developments that they were from the Western Türk Dynasty. Išbara, who became qagan in 634, divided his country into ten tribes, and each tribe was given an arrow. Subsequently they came to be mentioned as *On Šad* and *On Oq* ‘Ten Tribes, Ten Arrows’. Following that, the name the five Tuo-lu was given to five tribes and the name Nu-shih-pi was given to the other five tribes. The name of the Türgish was mentioned among the five Tuo-lu tribes, later, this name was generalized as the name of all the On-Oq tribes.<sup>795</sup>

The On-Oq ‘Ten Arrow’ organization occurred in the Western Türk territory, namely in Kirgizstan and Kazakhstan, after 634. That organization then took the Türgish name and formed the substructure of the Oguz Türks. They were called the western Oguz Türks after 766. Those who were founders of the Seljuk Empire and the Ottoman Empire were thus these Oguz.<sup>796</sup>

## 2.8. Toquz Oguz

The term Toquz Oguz ‘Nine Oguz’ was the written form used in the sources for the group of Töles tribes who lived around the Tola River and Kerulen, namely in the eastern part of the Eastern Türk State after 626. In general, the Toquz Oguz tribes were known by the

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<sup>793</sup> DOBROVITS 2004: 158-159.

<sup>794</sup> SKAFF 2012: 181.

<sup>795</sup> TAŞAĞIL 2007/2008: 245, 246.

<sup>796</sup> TAŞAĞIL 2007/2008: 246.

following names: Pu-gu, Hun, Bayirku (Ba-ye-gu), Tonra (Tong-lo), Zu-jie (Izgil), Qi-bi, A-bu-ze, Ku-lun-wu-ku, Ediz (A-tie).<sup>797</sup>

It is clear that the Türk independence movement against the Chinese started in 679, and also continued against the Toquz Oguz tribes. Battles between the Toquz Oguz and the Türks, which occurred very frequently, were often mentioned on the Orkhon Inscriptions.<sup>798</sup>

### **2.9. Uygurs**

The Uygurs were from the eastern Töles group. They established their state upon the Toquz Oguz group. After their state was destroyed, some of them went to China, the others, also, went to Turfan.<sup>799</sup>

### **2.10. Qarluqs**

After the Qarluq found themselves between the Türk State and the Uygur State, they started to act independently. Finally, they played their most significant historical role in the Karakhanid State.<sup>800</sup>

## **3. POLICIES TO CONTROL NOMAD TRIBES IN DOMESTIC POLICY**

It is generally held that we have no certain information about the number of the Turkic tribes. Chinese sources mentioned that there were altogether thirty Turkic tribes in the east and west wings of the qaganate. For the Eastern Türks, Czeglédý reports a Tibetan manuscript which gave a brief description, based on explorers' reports, of the countries of Central Asia, plainly telling that the Eastern Türks had twelve tribes, and actually gave the names of the twelve tribes. According to Czeglédý there were actually ten Turkic tribes in the eastern part of the qaganate. However, he claims that two tribes joined to the alliance later. The eleventh tribe is named Heftal. We know of the Hephthalites that it was only in 557 AD, after their defeat by the Türks, that they became the latter's subject. And the twelfth one, the Gar-rga-pur, were made to join their alliance. As result Czeglédý concludes his theory as follows: Twelve Turkic and eighteen Uygur-Oguz tribes, making altogether thirty tribes.<sup>801</sup> However, there is a newer work by Dobrovits, which we mentioned above, on this topic. He summarizes the eastern and western Turkic tribes, which are thirty in total differently. He counts thirty tribes with the eleven

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<sup>797</sup> TAŞAĞIL 2007/2008: 246.

<sup>798</sup> GOLDEN 1992: 145; TAŞAĞIL 2007/2008: 246.

<sup>799</sup> GOLDEN 1992: 146; TAŞAĞIL 2007/2008: 248.

<sup>800</sup> GOLDEN 1992: 143; TAŞAĞIL 2007/2008: 247.

<sup>801</sup> CZEGLÉDY 1972: 275-281.

tribes of the Eastern Türks, nine tribes of the Toquz Oguz and the ten tribes of the Western Türks (On Oq).<sup>802</sup>

Generally, during the Türk sovereignty, the leading tribes, under names such as Töles, Tarduš, Türgish, Qarluq, Kirgiz, and Toquz Oguz appeared on the historical scene and they played very important role. Next in political importance was the Toquz Oguz tribal group of ‘nine Oguz [tribes]’. The Toquz Oguz were more numerous than the other Türk tribes themselves but were politically less united. Two further confederations of tribes played an active role in the political life of the empire – the Qarluqs and the Basmils. Each individual tribe had its leader, the *erkin*, and each tribal group was headed by an *elteber*. Türk monuments frequently mention these important representatives of the tribal aristocracy – the *elteber* of the Uygurs, the Great Erkin of the Bayirku, and others.<sup>803</sup> Taşağıl studied the names of the Turkic and Mongolian speaking tribes of the Türk Qaganate in detail.<sup>804</sup> (Table 3)

Outer clients whom the Türks dominated on the peripheries of their states were conceived differently depending on the terms of submission. Those who had voluntarily surrendered and thereafter remitted their tribute might be referred to in patrimonial kinship terms. For example, when the Xianbei rulers of the Northern Qi and Northern Zhou dynasties were paying tribute to Taspar Qagan, the Türk ruler is reputed to have said, “So long as my two sons to the south remain filial, why should I worry that I may lack anything?”. More frequent references can be found to slaves whom the Türks forcibly dominated, indicating that they were vassals expected to render tribute. For example, after the Western Türks had defeated the Alans and Onogurs the Western ruler told a visiting Byzantine ambassador “they are our subjects and are numbered among our slaves”.<sup>805</sup>

### 3.1. Violence-confederation-control

The first strategy that most will think of when considering the question of cohesion and control in any empire is that of military power. Like other Inner Asian peoples before and after the the Türk and Uygurs established and maintained their empires through the use and threat of violence. Much of this was directed against their Inner Asian neighbours whom they subdued in order to create and sustain their polities – which are in the scholarly literature often termed “confederations” as they were comprised of numerous ethnic groups coming together, either willingly or not, to form unified political organizations. As is attested by the runic

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<sup>802</sup> DOBROVITS 2004c: 260.

<sup>803</sup> SINOR, KLYASHTORNY 1996: 336.

<sup>804</sup> TAŞAĞIL 2007/2008: 246.

<sup>805</sup> SKAFF 2012: 106.

monuments that many Türk and Uyğur elites erected, those elites' energies were often directed towards the subjugation – and sometimes the re-subjugation – of other Inner Asian peoples, both nomadic and sedentary. While Chinese sources tend to highlight attacks on Chinese territory, this was only part of the picture.<sup>806</sup>

### **3.2. Military campaigns**

Despite these strategies, subject peoples could and did rebel against their overlords. The First Türk Empire was created through the overthrow of the Ruanruan Empire (ca. 402-552), while the Uyğur Qaganate was an outgrowth of the rebellion that destroyed the Second Türk Empire. The Kül Tegin and Bilge Qagan monuments describe at length the need to employ violence against their enemies – not only distinct rival polities such as China but also peoples whom the Türks regarded as their subjects. This can be seen from that for a 23-year period (700-722) during the reigns of the qagans Kapgan and Bilge, the inscriptions describe some 18 distinct military campaigns carried out by the Eastern Türks. Only one of these is described as a campaign against China, although there were other Türk incursions into Chinese territory during this period; the rest were directed against other Inner Asian peoples – both nomadic (such as the Kirgiz and Qarluq) and sedentary (such as the Sogdians) – who resisted Türk control or rebelled against it. While conquest was a central theme in the foundation of Inner Asian empires, re-conquest also was significant in maintaining such empires.<sup>807</sup>

### **3.3. Submission**

Military power thus was not the only method through which the Türks and Uyğurs maintained their control over subject peoples. The submission was followed by the organization. The Türks' Orkhon Inscriptions speak of bringing order and organization to the realm, and of the imposition of state laws. Such organization of subordinated peoples included systems of extraction, both in the form of taxes (i.e., regular payment of tribute) and the expectation that subject groups would provide soldiers for imperial purposes. By this method the ruling elites brought new elements into their political and military structure, adding to their own personal power and strengthening the bonds between the ruler and the other peoples of the empire.<sup>808</sup>

### **3.4. Governors**

Once a people had been subjugated, Türk and Uyğur rulers sought to maintain control over them. This could be done through a number of methods, only some of which involved

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<sup>806</sup> DROMPP 2015: 437.

<sup>807</sup> DROMPP 2015: 438.

<sup>808</sup> DROMPP 2015: 438.

force or the threat of force. These particular steppe empires began the process of establishing political control over subject peoples through a system of organization that included both an overlay of their own (i.e., Türk or Uyğur) elites as well as collaboration with existing local elites, whose authority they affirmed through the granting of titles. For example, the prince who later became the Türk ruler Bilge Qagan (r. 716-734) first held the important office of *šad* of the Tarduš group of peoples. At the same time, individual ethnic groups often kept their own local leaders, who held their positions and titles at the pleasure of their Türk overlords. Yet another method of control connected to military power can be seen in the example of appointed governors who were charged with keeping an eye on some subject peoples in the Türk and Uyğur Qaganates. Such officials served as a reminder that their masters were determined to maintain their dominance.<sup>809</sup>

#### 4. SOME POLICIES APPLIED TO INNER AND OUTER RELATIONS

Allsen in his work mentions the 6 points that the Mongols applied to their sedentary subjects to maintain control. The Mongol Kubilai listed the demands in his order to the Prince of Annam in 1267: 1. The ruler must personally visit the court of the Great Khan; 2. sons and younger brothers are to be offered as hostages; 3. the population should be registered; 4. they must set up military units; 5. they should send tax revenues, and 6. a *Darugači* ‘governor’ should control them. In addition, it would appear that the Mongol Great Khan required them to maintain the imperial post road system.<sup>810</sup> The points, mentioned above, nonetheless provide a basic blueprint of the methods of controlling and exploiting the sedentary population of the empire that was used during the Mongols. Although some of the above items didn’t apply to the Türks’ control policy, they show similarities in the general outline. However, with a difference from the Mongols, many of these points were generally applied to the nomad policies including the Türk Qaganate. We know that the envoys of the nomad subjects and the settled neighbouring states visited Türk Qagans for political connections and to show their loyalties. Hostage policy occupied a special place in political relations with specifically China. Although we don’t have a source regarding population registration, military units were provided from other nomadic tribes. Türks also appointed administrators to control their subjects. We can refer as an example that *šads* and *čors* assigned to manage and control the Tarduš and On Oq people. As a final point, the postal system, which is an issue we have mentioned before, existed in the Türks Qaganate.

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<sup>809</sup> DROMPP 2015: 437-438.

<sup>810</sup> ALLSEN 1987: 114.

#### 4.1. The ambassadors

Ambassadors take an important place in the political contacts between the states. For this reason, Türk qagans used to send ambassadors to the rival countries many times such as to China, Byzantium, Sassanid, and even to the nomad tribes. The same is true for China. We have some data that a Chinese ambassador who lived in the East Türk settlements for many years made a statement about the traditions of the Türks and reported to his Chinese emperor.<sup>811</sup> We also know that Bilge Qagan's wife, Po-fu Qatun, was among the delegation that welcomed the ambassador from China.<sup>812</sup>

As we mentioned before, in the Chinese sources, the person who was sent to the Chinese palace as the ambassador by the Türks in 735 and 737 years was called *čabiš*.<sup>813</sup> In addition to this term, there is another term that represents ambassador which is *elči*.<sup>814</sup>

The Kutadgu Bilig gives a good summation of the represent prevailing in Inner Asia for the person of an ambassador. It puts the following saying in the mouth of an imaginary qagan of the Türks: "Don't punish the messenger for the message; he deserves neither punishment nor death so long as he truly reports what he heard; rather a messenger, as the ambassador of peace, is inviolable, and if he transmits the message that was entrusted him, then praise and reward are his due."<sup>815</sup>

#### 4.2. Bilingualism and the interpreters

Bilingualism appears to have been fairly common among elites of the Northern Dynasties. Most speakers of two languages probably were of Inner Asian ancestry, but some Han officials also are known to have educated their sons in Xianbei language even though some others frowned on this practice.<sup>816</sup> An excellent example of the phenomenon among the Xianbei is Zhangsun Jian, a Northern Zhou official who descended in the paternal line from the Tabgach royal lineage of the Northern Wei. Around 550 while serving as a local official in Henan and dressed in military uniform, he received a Liang Dynasty ambassador from the south. Zhangsun spoke to the visitor in Xianbei through a translator. However, that evening Zhangsun--dressed in civilian garb and adhering to rules of Confucian etiquette--hosted the Liang envoy at a banquet. The ambassador was shocked when Zhangsun spoke to him in fluent Chinese. It is impossible to determine the typicality of Zhangsun Jian's language abilities or propensity to

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<sup>811</sup> STARK 2010: 54.

<sup>812</sup> GÖMEÇ 1997: 90.

<sup>813</sup> DONUK 1988: 92.

<sup>814</sup> GÖMEÇ 2000: 935.

<sup>815</sup> SINOR 1997b: 345.

<sup>816</sup> The predictions about the Xianbei language by the experts is still controversial. But, Barthold claims that it was a Turkic language (BARTHOLD 2004: 25).

speak Xianbei in the military context and Chinese in the civil one. However, a great deal of circumstantial evidence suggests that the eminent north-western lineages involved in founding the Northern Zhou, Sui, and Tang were bilingual in Xianbei and Chinese. Taizong and some other members of the Li lineage may have spoken Turkic too.<sup>817</sup>

Turkic Qagans are known to have employed Türk, Sogdian, Han, and perhaps Indian retainers who could handle scribal duties in a several languages. The earliest surviving example of multilingualism at the Türk court is the late sixth-century Bugut stele, which has inscriptions in Sogdian on three sides and Brahmi on the other. Sui exiles also served the qagans in the early seventh century. When some court officials stereotypically told Tang Gaozu that the Türks would not understand his diplomatic letters, the emperor responded that this was untrue because many scholars had fled to the Türks during the civil war at the end of the Sui. About a decade later, Illig Qagan employed the Han person, Zhao Deyan, but Sogdians comprised the largest contingent of his officials.<sup>818</sup>

#### **4.3. Language and cultural exchange**

By the seventh century, Turkic appears to have become their primary administrative language, but some Türks also learned Chinese. The Sui and Tang courts provided education as part of a civilizing mission. Those who argue that Chinese literacy was a sign of assimilation or Sinicization, overlook that Türk rulers valued Chinese literacy as a source of potential political and military advantage. Politically-driven elite circulation between North China and Inner Asia in the sixth through eighth centuries, as educated men sought patrons and/or the losers in power struggles sought asylum. Türk rulers accepted educated Sogdians, Han, and probably Xianbei into their service. Likewise, Türks fled to the Sui and Tang empires. Further aspects of cultural exchange that were the products of these four factors will be explored in subsequent chapters.<sup>819</sup>

#### **4.4. Oath ceremonies**

Oaths were a common way in Eurasia for clients to pledge allegiance to patrons or seal other types of covenants. Evidence of oaths among Türks is more sporadic. The Turkic term for making a verbal pledge literally means, to drink an oath. The Uyghur blood oath involved cutting flesh above the heart to show sincerity, allowing blood to flow into a vessel, recitation of the oath, and drinking of the blood to sanctify the pledge. Earlier in history, the Scythians and

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<sup>817</sup> SKAFF 2012: 127.

<sup>818</sup> SKAFF 2012: 130.

<sup>819</sup> SKAFF 2012: 133.



Xiongnu drank mixtures of alcohol and horse or human blood.<sup>820</sup> Türks did not necessarily appear to have carried out drinking rituals when they interacted with settled people to the west. For example, the Türk embassy to Byzantium of 568 convinced the Emperor Justinos to agree to “peace and an offensive and defensive alliance” when the Türk and Sogdian envoys raised their hands and swore an oath that they were being truthful. A drinking ritual also is not mentioned a century and a half later, when Sogdian nobles swore fidelity to Sulu of the Türgish, as mentioned previously. This sort of verbal pledge seems to have been widely recognized in cross-cultural situations.<sup>821</sup>

#### 4.5. Animal sacrificing as symbol of peace

When the Tang general Li Jing led the Tang campaign against the Tuyuhun in 635, he recruited a Tangut leader to serve as a guide in exchange for grain and monetary compensation. The two men sealed the agreement with a covenant. During the start of the Türk rebellion in the Ordos in the early 680s, A-shi-na Funian defeated the Tang general Cao Huaishun, who probably was of Sogdian ancestry. A-shi-na and Cao made a peace pact (*yuehe*). Cao and surviving Tang troops were given free passage in return for valuables. The two leaders sacrificed an ox to seal their covenant. The purely personal nature of this covenant is demonstrated by the fact that Cao was punished with exile upon his return to the capital.<sup>822</sup>

Beginning two years later in fall 624, Li Shimin, the future Taizong, became intertwined in the making of pacts with Illig Qagan. When a Tang army counterattacked against a Türk incursion deep into Guannei only 100 kilometers northwest of Chang-an, Li Shimin separated from the main force and rode with 100 horsemen to personally confront Shimin claimed to Illig, in a quotation that has two surviving redactions, that the two sides had either marriage relations or an oath (*shi*) of mutual non-aggression. Both accounts agree that Shimin said, “Why are you breaking the pact (*beiyue*) by coming deep into our territory?” The next day Illig Qagan sent Tuli Qagan to Shimin to ambiguously propose marriage relations. Shimin “approved” though he lacked authority to make a state-level agreement. At this time, Tuli and Shimin renewed their private covenant of blood brotherhood. Once more, information is lacking until two years later in 626 when Illig’s deepest incursion ever took the Türk armies to the north bank of the Wei River near Chang-an. Illig probably was hoping to take advantage of political turmoil in the capital where Taizong recently had usurped rule. The familiar pattern was repeated as Taizong rode with six other horsemen to the Bian Bridge to personally accuse Illig

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<sup>820</sup> GOLDEN 1998: 192.

<sup>821</sup> SKAFF 2012: 192.

<sup>822</sup> SKAFF 2012: 193.

Qagan of shamelessly breaking their covenant, which included marriage relations and large quantities of gold and silk. On this occasion, Taizong and Illig sealed another covenant on the bridge by sacrificing a white horse. Presumably, the ceremony included a blood oath. The terms of the agreement are unknown, but Taizong must have been forced to pay a high indemnity because he later referred to the incident as the “Shame of the Wei River”. Despite the humiliating concessions, this covenant was the most successful from the Tang perspective because the Türks only carried out three raids over the next four years, a small number compared to the sixty-three attacks from 620 to 626. The relative peace probably was due less to the covenant than improved Tang frontier defenses from 627 onward and Illig Qagan’s perhaps related problems with domestic political turmoil.<sup>823</sup>

#### **4.6. Hostage policy and education**

Sui and Tang policies encouraged Chinese literacy among the children of vassals. The Sui and Tang took sons or younger brothers of rulers as hostages. Although adult hostages usually entered the palace guard corps, younger boys served as pages at court and were taught Chinese. The purpose of educating pages was to encourage assimilation into Han culture and loyalty to the ruling dynasty. The Türk elite willingly sent boys to the Sui-Tang courts to serve as pages for a number of reasons. First, hostage taking was a widely accepted Eurasian customary practice of guaranteeing covenants between rulers. Second, Türk rulers recognized the benefits of education. They valued retainers who could handle diplomatic correspondence in Chinese and other languages. For example, when the Buddhist pilgrim Xuanzang visited the Western Türks in 630, he met a member of Yabgu Qagan’s retinue who had been educated in Chang-an and now handled diplomatic correspondence in Chinese and other unknown languages. This literate retainer also seems to have been responsible for handling relations with visiting Chinese speaking dignitaries because he was assigned to accompany Xuanzang to the next major stop on his pilgrimage. Third, Chinese education seems to have enhanced the status of boys who served as pages. For example, Törü Apa ‘Father of the Law’ --the grandson of a chief from the Kirgiz region on the northern periphery of the Mongolian steppe--was dispatched to the Tang court at age of fifteen for education as a ‘hostage of honor’ and married a ‘noble Chinese’ woman. Later, he inherited his father’s position in the government of the Second Türk Empire as head of the interior service and had gold, silver, fine clothing, and cattle. Judging from the tenor of the inscription, his education and cosmopolitan life burnished his reputation as much as his wealth and political power. Törü Apa was the type of person who played a

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<sup>823</sup> SKAFF 2012: 196.

pivotal role in the internal and external affairs of the Second Türk Empire. His personal relationships with friends and kin in his homeland of southern Siberia linked that region to the Türk court in central Mongolia. His bicultural orientation, reinforced by marriage to a Chinese woman, also equipped him to play an important role in external relations between the Türks and Tang. He and others with similar backgrounds were well suited to serving the Türk Empire as envoys to the Tang court or propagandist devising Chinese regnal titles.<sup>824</sup>

Hostage taking was a common Eurasian method of signaling and guaranteeing the fidelity of outer clients. Elite hostages, especially sons or younger brothers of rulers, were dispatched to the court of the patron. Hostage taking of boys was practiced in the Han and Roman empires but had even more ancient roots. It also appeared in medieval times among nomad peoples. In the sixth century, a Byzantine general tentatively negotiated a pact under which the Avars would provide sons of the tribal elite as hostages in exchange for permission to reside on Byzantine territory, essentially as outer clients. The Byzantine emperor, Justinos, blocked the deal because he insisted on hostages who were sons of the Avar qagan. This scattered evidence suggests that hostage taking was common in Eurasia from ancient times. The patron's desire for control over the kin of his clients is another indication that interstate pacts were viewed as personal agreements between rulers.

The prevalence of hostage taking in Sui-Tang relations with Türk is difficult to assess because relatively few foreign diplomats who remained in Chang-an are specifically labeled as hostages. Of known cases, hostages most commonly were sons and brothers of the monarch. If a hostage's polity rebelled against Sui or Tang authority, the detained boy or man normally was not killed but was retained to serve as a potential puppet ruler. For example, after the Tang conquest of the Tuyuhun in 635, Taizong installed Murong Shun to succeed his father as qagan because Shun had served as a hostage-page at the Sui and Tang courts. On the other hand, former hostages were not necessarily subservient to the Sui or Tang. Two hostage-pages of the late seventh century, Sun Wanrong of the Khitan and Ashide Yuanzhen of the Türks, became involved in resistance against the Tang. The anti-Tang stance of these two former hostages became cause famed to literati Confucians who argued against hosting hostages at court.<sup>825</sup>

In addition, it is useful to mention the internal educational structure of the Türks. First of all, it should be noted that when it comes to education, the modern education structure of today should not be considered. Education was a subject imposed by living conditions of the society, based on experience and it passed down from generation to generation. Even the

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<sup>824</sup> SKAFF 2012: 130-131.

<sup>825</sup> SKAFF 2012: 197-198.

educational structure of the two neighbouring societies differed due to the geographical conditions and cultural structure of that period. The Türk Qaganate was a powerful political force in the Eurasian steppes for nearly two centuries. The Türk state would not have been a strong rival to its settled neighbours if they wouldn't have had an educational structure that they developed within themselves. As in all societies, vocational education held the most important place in daily life. The Türks, who formed a dynamic society for the nomadic lifestyle, passed their experiences on blacksmithing, animal husbandry, military professions, and many other occupations to the next generations for decades. A subject we mentioned earlier, *törü*, non-written custom law, also ensured the order and education of the society. The most important innovation of the era was that the Türks developed an alphabet for the first time in nomad history and left inscriptions behind. Their alphabet had 38 letters. Although there are different theories about its origin, it is a general view that they learned it from Sogdians. Byzantine sources mention a Scythian letter sent by the Türks to Constantinople. This runic alphabet was also used in the early periods of the Uyghurs, who were the successors of the Türks. The real question is, how this alphabet, which was used by the Türks for centuries, passed down to the next generations? This indicates the existence of an education system within them. Maybe the common people did not learn this runic alphabet widely. But the ruling strata must have taught this alphabet through a school system. It is necessary to consider the possibility that this alphabet was probably used in bureaucratic relations with neighbours, record the amount of the taxes, and in military matters.

#### **4.7. Marriage strategy**

Turko-Mongol rulers typically initiated marriage negotiations with the Sui and Tang. In part, they wanted to use external marriage connections to realize external strategic objectives, but internal political considerations probably played a greater role. Marriages to the emperors of China-based dynasties carried enormous prestige that could bolster the status of a nomadic ruler. Marital bonds also implied exclusive ties with the Sui and Tang. In this way Türks prevented their domestic rivals to find a source of external support. In addition, the brides brought dowries that varied in size depending on the balance of power. Overall, the prestige of the marriages to Sui-Tang emperors seems to have been the greatest draw, but strong qagans were unwilling to make too many concessions.<sup>826</sup>

During the period under consideration here, one of the best –known manifestations of the political alliance was that of the inter-state marriage. It has already been noted that Bumin's

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<sup>826</sup> SKAFF 2012: 219.

rise to power began with his skillful arrangement of a marital alliance with Emperor Wendi (r. 535-552) of the Western Wei.<sup>827</sup> Negotiations over marriage ties involved considerations of strategy and status. The example of Bumin, founder of the First Türk Qaganate is illuminating. The Türks originally was an outer tribe of the Ruanruan whose leader, Bumin, assisted the Ruanruan qagan, A-na-gui (r. 520- 52) by attacking and incorporating the rebellious Tiele tribal union in 546. Thereafter, Bumin requested a match with one of the qagan's daughters based on his rising prestige as a valued client. The Ruanruan emperor was incensed and sent an envoy with the insulting message, "You are my blacksmith slave. How dare you speak in this way?". Bumin became furious as the qagan treated him as a low-status outer client, and he killed the emissary, and broke relations with the Ruanruan. Since Anagui already had a marriage alliance with the Eastern Wei, Bumin naturally requested marriage relations with the Western Wei. The alliance was sealed when the Western Wei court sent Bumin a princess in 551. Bumin had succeeded in securing his southern flank and also bolstering his prestige with a high-status bride. In the following year, Bumin capitalized on these diplomatic successes to overthrow the Ruanruan and established the Türks as rulers of Mongolia. These events reveal much about the protocol and purpose of Inner Asian marriage relations. Diplomatic custom required the inferior party to request marital ties, while the patron determined whether or not to bestow a bride. Anagui's refusal of the marriage was a cause of resentment and cause for a war. The subsequent marriage between the Türks and Western Wei signaled mutual non-aggression. Contemporary rulers in Mongolia, Inner Mongolia and North China had a common understanding of the diplomatic signals of these marriages.<sup>828</sup> Strategic calculations probably lay behind most marriage relations. Bumin Qagan's ties to the Western Wei are mentioned above. In another cases Ištemi of the Western Türks sent a princess to the Sassanid ruler Khosrow in 557 to seal an alliance against the Hephthalites.<sup>829</sup>

The Sui court attempted to use diplomatic marriages as part of an expansive strategy to divide and weaken the First Türk Empire. The first Sui-Türk marriage in 584 was perhaps the most unusual. Išbara Qagan had retreated south to Inner Mongolia and sought Sui aid because of pressure from the Western Türks and Khitan. To signal the warming relations, Išbara's wife, the Qianjin Princess of the recently deposed Northern Zhou Dynasty, was adopted into the Yang lineage and thereby transformed into a Sui princess. From the Sui perspective, this experiment was an abject failure. The princess hated Wendi because he was responsible for

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<sup>827</sup> SKAFF 2012: 195.

<sup>828</sup> SKAFF 2012: 204-205.

<sup>829</sup> GOLDEN 1992: 127.

the death of her father, and she worked to undermine Sui interests. After the death of Išbara, Sui Wendi refused to bestow a bride on the powerful successor, Du-lan, in 597 but instead granted marriage to Du-lan's defeated rival, Qimin Qagan. Qimin moved his headquarters to Inner Mongolia. As part of his deal with the Sui, Qimin had worked surreptitiously to kill the Qianjin Princess. After Du-lan's death, Qimin leveraged Sui military and financial support to become the leading Türk qagan. Later Sui Yangdi felt that Qimin's successor, Shibi Qagan, was becoming too powerful, and attempted to duplicate his father's policy of divide and rule by offering a bride to Shibi's younger brother. This time the diplomatic machinations backfired when Shibi blocked the marriage and began to raid the Sui.<sup>830</sup>

The Tang founder, Li Yuan, sent an envoy to Shibi Qagan. They sealed a pact (*yue*) in which the Türks agreed to supply 2,000 cavalymen and 1,000 horses to assist in the conquest of the Sui capital where the Tang would take control of the population and territory. In return, the Türks would receive all wealth and valuables of the capital. The agreement apparently involved marriage relations because different sources report that Li Yuan sent a daughter or dancing girl to Shibi around the same time. Further information about the pact is lacking until 622 when Illig Qagan launched a massive attack on Hedong. A Tang envoy accused the qagan of violating their previous pact. The envoy proposed a new deal that would renew marriage relations and provide Illig with valuables for his personal treasury. Illig was pleased with the offer and signaled his agreement by withdrawing his forces. However, there is no record of a bride sent to Illig.<sup>831</sup>

In another case, Bilge Qagan's qatun or primary wife, Po-fu, was the daughter of the elder statesman Tonyuquq. After Kapgan Qagan's death and a short civil war, Po-fu may have played a role in convincing Bilge Qagan to spare her father, Tonyuquq, who had supported a rival. Later Po-fu was present with her husband and father at the drinking party entertaining a Tang ambassador in 725, which included important negotiations over Bilge's request to take a Tang princess as a bride. After Bilge Qagan's death, she acted as regent for their young son from 734 to 741 in an unstable political environment. Po-fu's life provides evidence that elite wives could exercise considerable power. The brief account of Po-fu's life was unusual in being preserved in the Sui-Tang historical records. She received notice because of her prominent father and husband, political influence, and eventual surrender to the Tang, which brought her

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<sup>830</sup> SKAFF 2012: 212.

<sup>831</sup> SKAFF 2012: 195.

story to the attention of Confucian record keepers, but we can suppose that many other similar marriages occurred among contemporary inner tribes.<sup>832</sup>

Aside from this, Bilge Qagan also sought a Tang bride but had less leverage than his uncle Kapgan who made repeated marriage proposals to Xuanzong from 718 onward, but never obtained an agreement. Xuanzong insisted that Bilge accept the same terms as the Qay and Khitan that included a personal visit to the Tang court and appointment as a bridle official. Bilge resisted these humiliating concessions. Xuanzong declined Bilge's proposal in 721 because of a Türk raid in the previous year, but implied that the Tang might be open to future proposals, if the Türks demonstrated peaceful intentions. When a Tang diplomat visited the Türks in 725, a revealing exchange occurred when the Tang envoy entered the qagan's tent. Bilge said while inebriated, "The Tang has established marriage ties with the Tibetan sons of dogs, and the Qay and Khitan, former slaves of the Türks. Only the Türks have requested marriage ties from start to finish and have been refused. Why?"<sup>833</sup> The Tang ambassador replied diplomatically that such marital bonds would be incestuous because the Tang emperor and qagan had agreed to a father-son relationship. Bilge retorted that Xuanzong had marriage relations with Khitan and Qay monarchs who used the Tang imperial surname Li, and in any event, these Tang brides were not the true daughters of the emperor. Bilge repeatedly pressed for marriage relations to bolster his prestige because he faced a relatively tenuous internal political situation. However, no marriage ever took place because of Bilge's unwillingness to become a Tang bridle official, which would have diminished his stature.<sup>834</sup>

Beside bride exchanges, Türk rulers also engaged in marriage relations with outer clients or rivals qagans. For example, the Türk Bilge Qagan's daughter was married to the Türgish qagan, Sulu, while Sulu's daughter was married to Bilge's son.<sup>835</sup> The arrangement apparently acknowledged that the qaganates were nearly equal in power, but Bilge Qagan had seniority as Sulu's father-in-law. In another case, Türk qagans bestowed daughters and sisters on their Kirgiz outer clients. As for the Western Türks, A-shi-na He-lu favored the chiefs of one subordinate On Oq tribe with marriages to his daughters. Political marriages between the Türk elites and sedentary client-rulers are even better attested. The Western Türks bestowed brides upon kings of the oasis-states of Gaochang, Samarqand, Karashahr, and Kashgar during the late sixth and early seventh centuries. Lower levels of the tribal elite might be involved in

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<sup>832</sup> SKAFF 2012: 204-205.

<sup>833</sup> JTS 194a:5175; MAU-TSAI 1958.

<sup>834</sup> SKAFF 2012: 221-222.

<sup>835</sup> TEKİN 1968: 280; DROMPP 2015: 440.

this type of match. For example, the important official of the Western Türks, Küli Čor arranged a marriage between his younger brother and the daughter of the king of Karashahr in 640.<sup>836</sup>

The princesses who were bestowed were not daughters of emperors, but generally sororal kin, being female descendants of emperors' daughters. During periods of internal political weakness, Tang rulers engaged in defensive marital diplomacy with great powers in Mongolia. Forced to make concessions, emperors were more likely to initiate negotiations and give true daughters as brides. In two cases Empress Wu even agreed to accept royal Türk brides for her male relatives, but the weddings never took place. From Sui to mid-Tang, expansive diplomacy was the norm while defensive diplomacy dominated after the An Lu-shan rebellion.<sup>837</sup>

Throughout history, tribal leaders could take multiple wives who in turn would produce large numbers of progeny, including daughters to be married off to allies and subordinates. In the medieval period qagans generally engaged in two types of marriages, both of which had political purposes. One was an exchange of brides with other elite lineages belonging to the inner tribes or relatively equal external powers, and the other was the bestowal of brides on favored outer clients. The marriages might reinforce existing political ties or signal new strategic relationships. Aside from purely political concerns, the social status of a prospective mate also seems to have weighed heavily into considerations of a match.<sup>838</sup>

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<sup>836</sup> SKAFF 2012: 204-205.

<sup>837</sup> SKAFF 2012: 212.

<sup>838</sup> SKAFF 2012 204-205.



## CONCLUSION

The Türk Qaganate belongs to one of the strongest Eurasian Steppe empires which had basic influence in the medieval world. It was the major strength of Eurasia connecting China, Persia, India, and Byzantium from the middle of the 6th century for approximately two hundred years.

Türks, with various legends of origin, appeared as the first steppe empire that used the Türk name to the history of the steppe. This ethnonym has survived to the present day as a name of language family and nation's name.

Türks as having nomad life had their economic base on animal breeding with mainly five grazing animals: sheep, goats, cattle, camels, and horses whose products deliver them with food, clothing, shelter (*yurt*), and transportation. Nomads migrate with their livestock along constant seasonal, round-experience routes timed to provide the animals continuously with fresh grass. The fundamental political and socioeconomic unit is the camp, which travels together.

The economy, which is thought to be based only on animal husbandry, is a very general prejudice, and as we have already mentioned, it turned out that it is much more complicated. Some of the Türks are fixed in the sources they are dealing with agriculture. Even more interesting is the provision of agriculture in two ways. In other words, Türks living in China and vice versa, Chinese living within the borders of Türks produced agricultural production. Leaving these aside, it is evident that Türks developed very different economic income methods. Such as border trades with China, trade through Silk Road, collecting taxes from the subordinated tribes and obtaining a dowry due to the brides bought from China, etc.

Based on the sources, we explained that they used the decimal system in the armies and they had special equestrian units in their armies. The Türks made some inventions that would change the tactics of war and even the military order of other communities around the world. These were wood-framed saddles and metal stirrups. Thanks to these inventions, weapon technology changed, they could use arrows and bows more freely on horseback. Besides this longer lance, long and curved sabers were used. While the Türks led the nomadic empires that followed, thanks to their military structure, they inspired societies like China, Persia, Islamic lands, Byzantium to change their military structures.

The Türks had a hierarchical system as other nomadic states. Qagan, who was regarded as the representative of God on earth and who was blessed by God, was at the top of the state.

Under the term *beg*, a gradual and wide chain of hierarchy was established. Some sort of different state institutes was built. Army, economy, internal relations, and international relations were gradually managed by different units. Even though they did not have a settled lifestyle and institutions, they build established an adequate order which met the needs of a nomad state.

In addition to the hierarchical order, the order of the social structure was also discussed in our study. It was difficult to control and keep in order a low populated society in the vast steppes. This social structure probably formed spontaneously under the conditions of steppe life. It was a pyramid structure formed by family, *bod*, *bodun*, and finally *el* the state. The tribes under their domination were brought into order and made military and economic contributions to the state.

Türk Qaganate was a nomadic state to reach a wide geographic space and serious political power affecting the empires from China to Byzantine. They applied power politics against his contemporaries. The state authority was not only based on their military structure., They could reach superiority with their smart politics against China from time to time, established a political alliance with Byzantine, and gained an advantage over the Silk Road against the Sassanids. They were successful with smart and reasonable politics too. It is also important that they were able to keep all the fragile and rebellion-oriented Eurasian Steppe nomads under control for two centuries.

There are two more issues worth mentioning: external dependence and analogy theories. The adherents of the theory of external dependence think that nomadism depends on the environment and the neighbouring agricultural-urban societies. This opinion goes back to the works of Owen Lattimore.<sup>839</sup>

There is no doubt - as many historians have pointed out - that, the relation with China was of great significance in the formation of steppe empires, and Barfield's works have done an important service in demanding a reappraisal of those relations. But a careful analyse of Barfield's model of Inner Asian state formation raises difficulties. Its emphasis on the contemporaneity of great Chinese power and great nomad power due to the result of the latter's role as both "shadow" and "parasite" of the former are debated in several respects.<sup>840</sup>

The underlying idea of this approach is that the extensive pastoral economies, the low population density, and the absence of a settled way of life did not create the necessity to

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<sup>839</sup> LATTIMORE 1940.

<sup>840</sup> BARFIELD 1989: 8.

develop some form of institutionalized hierarchy. Therefore, the nomads had no need for creating a state among the nomads.<sup>841</sup>

While the rise and fall of the Xiongnu empire (BC 209 – 155 AD) did occur within the temporal confines of the Qin – Han imperium (BC 221 – 220 AD), the next correlation of Chinese and nomadic power is less orderly. As Barfield notes, the Türks rose to paramountcy in Mongolia in 552. He also correctly indicated that China's long period of division between North and South did not end until the rise of the Sui Dynasty in 581 and its reunification of China in 589. If, as Barfield claims, steppe empires were "secondary phenomena" arising in response to Chinese imperial organization and expansion, how could a strong steppe empire be established several decades before the reunification of China, upon which its existence was supposedly predicated? At the time of the establishment of Türk power in Mongolia, China was far from united.<sup>842</sup>

The Türks ultimately reasserted their power in 682, creating a revived state that would last for some 60 years. This second empire, while not as large as its predecessor, was nonetheless a large polity with significant interest in its relationship to China.<sup>843</sup>

It seems clear from this study that the collapse of the Türk Qaganate was not caused by Chinese decline. The first Türk empire was crushed by a powerful Tang state after the Chinese had exploited dissension among the already divided Türk ruling elite and their subject peoples. The second Türk empire was overthrown by subject peoples at a time when China was still strong and unified.<sup>844</sup> Nomads could independently establish a rudimentary state and that their society had been divided into the classes of the aristocracy and common people.

Another, more subtle, and therefore more resilient problem is caused by reasoning in terms of historical analogy. Correspondences and analogies have been registered by placing Herodotus' description of the Scythians (or other Western accounts) next to Sima Qian's description of the Xiongnu.<sup>845</sup>

An extensive investigation of nomadic sites from the Black Sea to Mongolia demolished the myth of a cohesive cultural complex. It is now amply clear that the "Scythian" world was made of different communities and archaeological cultures and that we cannot speak of the Sakas or Scythians as a single historical or cultural phenomenon. The steppe peoples to the north of China likewise exhibit great cultural diversity, not only in terms of burial practices,

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<sup>841</sup> KRADIN 2015: 13-14.

<sup>842</sup> DI COSMO 2015: 58-59; DROMPP 2005: 102.

<sup>843</sup> DROMPP 2005: 105.

<sup>844</sup> DROMPP 2005: 109.

<sup>845</sup> DI COSMO 2015: 52.

technology, and art but in socio-economic terms as well. Some were more dependent on pastoral nomadism as their main economic activity than others, some were more warlike than others, and some were able to build large states while others were not. We must therefore ask ourselves whether it is legitimate to draw analogies in the ways in which Xiongnu, Türks, and Mongols created their empires and interacted with other empires simply because they belonged to the same ethnographic or anthropological category of “steppe nomads”.

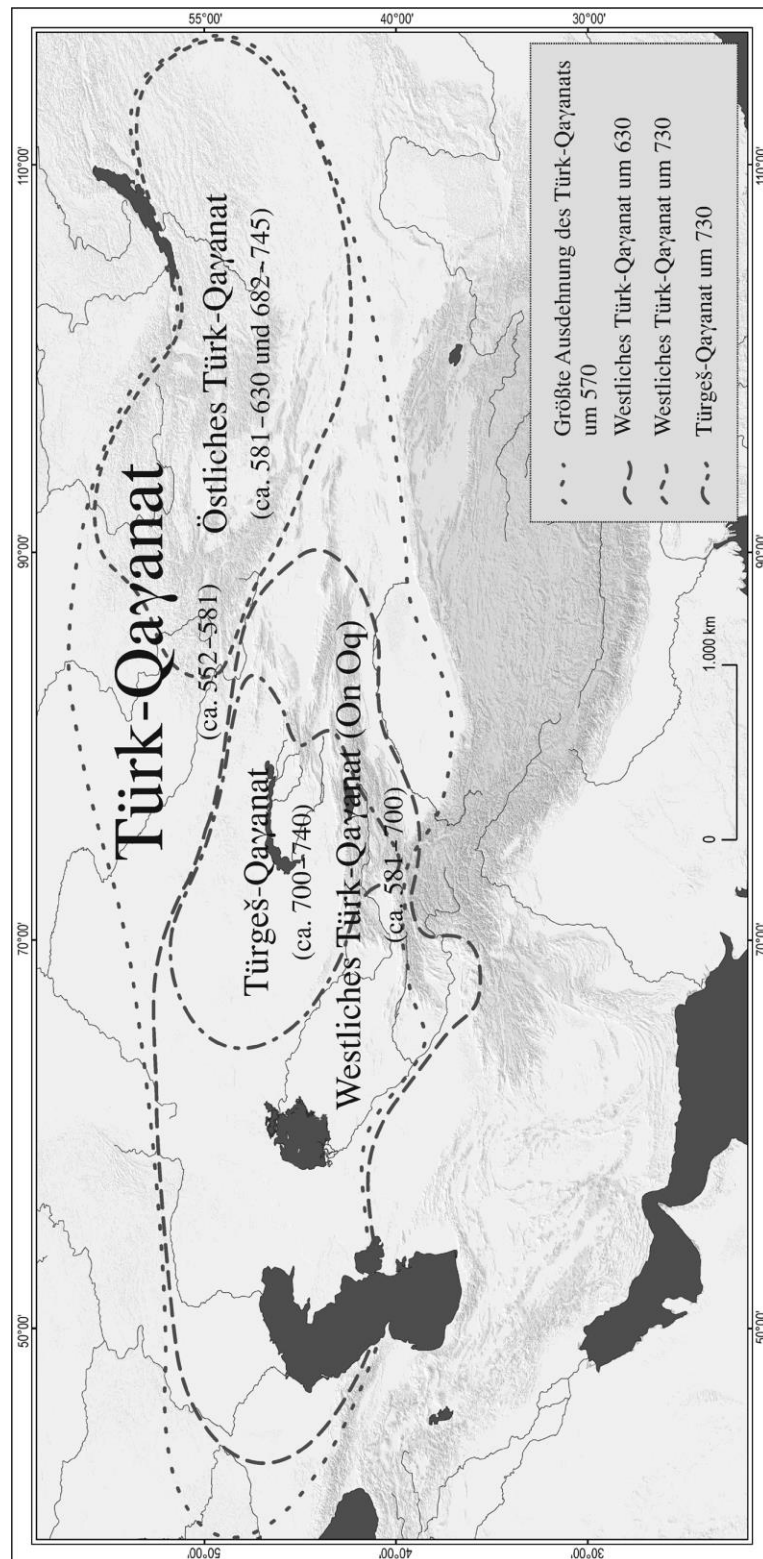
Reasoning by analogy establishes a direct but unfortunately inaccurate equivalence between how these peoples earned their living (assumed to be always the same) and the way in which they acted politically. We need to consider that the socio-economic circumstances of these nomads varied over time and from the community to community and included different forms of production that surely affected their political choices.<sup>846</sup>

The Türk Qaganate made a difference with their features and inventions in nomad and world history. For the first time in history, a nomad state developed a unique writing system and left behind monuments that survived to the present day. They created a versatile economic system that didn't depend solely on nomad living conditions. They established regular armies using the decimal system. Metal stirrups as war equipment were on the rise in this period of history. Firmly connected to this invention, they developed new weapons such as long and curved swords and long lances. For the first time in history, a nomad state that reached such wide borders in the Eurasian steppes was ruled from *yurt*. They established a social order where the *yurt* was the center. As a result, the Türks established a systematic nomadic state in all aspects and formed an important political power for nearly two centuries against the mighty settled empires of their time.

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<sup>846</sup> DI COSMO 2015: 53.

## MAPS



**Map 1:** Approximate extent of the Türk Qaganate (STARK 2008: 455.)

## TABLES

Inscriptions	With Türk	With other ethnic names	Sum
Kül Tegin Bilge Qagan	33	46	124
Tonyuquq	12	6	30
Ongin	3	...	5
Küli-Čor	2	1	4
Šine Usu	3	4	20
Terhk	2	3	24
Tez	...	...	3
Sum	55	60	210

**Table 1:** Frequency of Use of Bodun Word in Inscriptions. (ZIMONYI 2003: 63.)

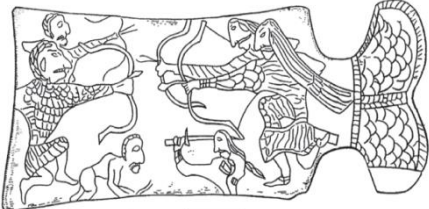
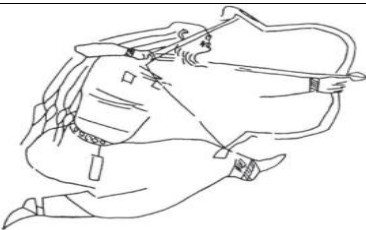




<i>Ruler</i>	<i>Khanate</i>	<i>Dates</i>	<i>Total Attacks</i>	<i>Attacks/Year</i>
<i>Various</i>	Türk	599–602	6	1.25
Qimin Qaghan	Türk	603–09	0	0.00
Shibi Qaghan	Türk	610–19	5	0.50
Chuluo Qaghan	Türk	619–20	2	1.00
<b>Illig Qaghan</b>	<b>Türk</b>	<b>621–30</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>6.20</b>
Zhenzhu Bilgä Qaghan	Sir-Yantuo	628–45	2	0.11
<i>Various</i>	Sir-Yantuo	645–6	0	0.00
Tumidu	Uighur	646–48	0	0.00
Porun	Uighur	649–60	0	0.00
Bisudu	Uighur	661–79	1	0.05
<i>Various</i>	Türk	679–81	4	1.33
<b>Ilterish Qaghan</b>	<b>Türk</b>	<b>682–93</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>1.00</b>
<b>Qapaghan Qaghan</b>	<b>Türk</b>	<b>694–715</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>0.91</b>
Bilgä Qaghan	Türk	716–34	3	0.16
Tängri Qaghan	Türk	735–41	0	0.00
<i>Various</i>	Basmil/Uighur	742–46	0	0.00
Gele Qaghan	Uighur	747–55	0	0.00

**Table 2:** Attacks on North China by Rulers of Mongolia and/or Inner Mongolia, 599-755 (Major attackers in bold type). (SKAFF 2012: 43.)

<b>Turkic Tribes</b>		<b>Mongol Tirbes</b>
Töles/Tiele	Meng-chen	Xi
A-tie/Ediz	Sir Tarduš	Khitan
Bayirku/Ba-ye-gu	İzgil/Si-jie	Ku-mo-xi
Basmil/Ba-xi-mi	Tarduš	Meng-wu
Qi-bi	Toquz Oguz	Wa-jie-ze
Ju	Duo-lan-ge	Wu-liang-xia
Ju-hai	Tu-ru-he	Shi-wei
Qu-du-wei	Du-po	Ju
Fu-lo	Tongra/Tung-lo	
Hu-xie	Wei-he	
Hun	Türgish/On Oq	
Az	Uygur	
Qarluk	Kirghiz	

**Table 3:** Turkic and Mongol tribes of the Türk Qaganate (TAŞAĞIL 2011: 83-101.)

## FIGURES

	
<p>Figure 1: Battle Scene on a bone plate from Sutu-Bulak, Kirgizstan. (ATLAS 2013: 507.)</p>	<p>Figure 2: A warrior shooting a composite bow. Petroglyph of Valley Chaganki River, Altai. (ATLAS 2013: 617.)</p>
	
<p>Figure 3: Petroglyphs from Sulek, Kudirge, Kem. (ÇORUHLU 2007: 183.)</p>	<p>Figure 4: Sarcophagus of Yu Hong: A hunter with a composite reflex bow. (YATSENKO)</p>
	
<p>Figure 5: Miho Museum: In the lower tier we see mounted Türks hunting in the mountains. (<a href="http://www.miho.or.jp/booth/html/artcon/00000432e.htm">http://www.miho.or.jp/booth/html/artcon/00000432e.htm</a>)</p>	<p>Figure 6: Whistling arrowheads belong to the Türks. Huna region, Mongolia. (ERDÉLYI 2000: 198.)</p>



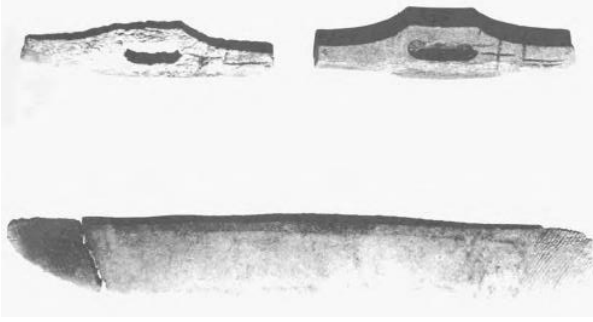
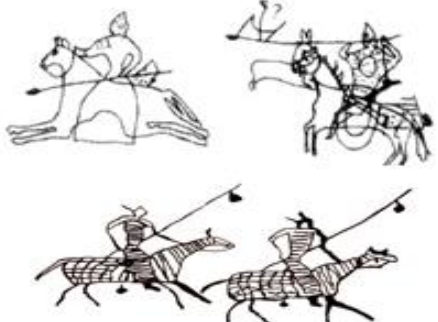


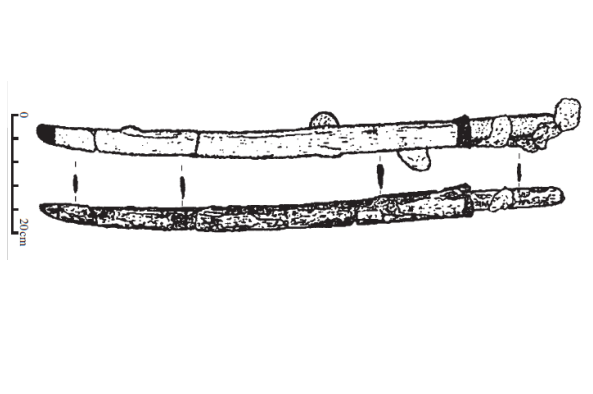


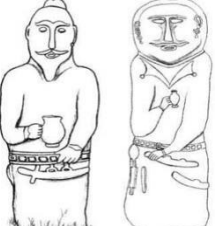
	
<p>Figure 7: Parts of a composite bow handle belong to the Türks. (ERDÉLYI 2000: 197.)</p>	<p>Figure 8: Türk cavalries with their lances on different petroglyphs from Sulek, Kem, Char-chad. (ÇORUHLU 2007: 178, 183.)</p>
	
<p>Figure 9: A Kirgiz saber from Kem region. (ESİN 1978: XLV/c)</p>	<p>Figure 10: Saber from Kudirge kurgan. (STARK 2008: 532.)</p>
	
<p>Figure 11: Sabers from Kirgizstan, Besh Tash kurgan. (STARK 2008: 532.)</p>	<p>Figure 12: Sculpture from Bortala region with a saber. (STARK 2008: 531.)</p>
	
<p>Figure 13: Türks with their long sabers from Afrasiyab Wall Paintings. (YATSENKO)</p>	<p>Figure 14: Turkic sculptures with daggers, from Toto and Kypchyl of the Altai Mountains. (A.I. SOLOV'EV)</p>



Figure 15: An Qie. There is a dagger suspended to his black belt (on the right). (YATSENKO)



Figure 16: Altai mountains, Kudirge pommel of the hard framed saddle, VI.-VII. Centuries. (A.I. SOLOV'EV)

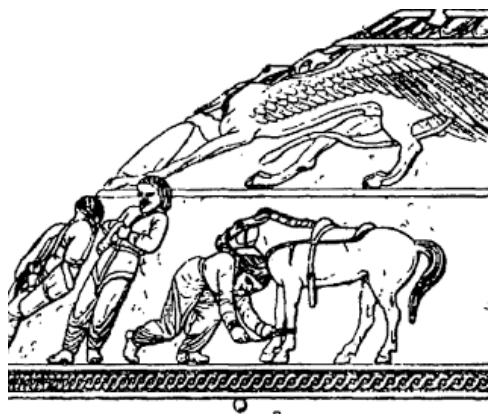


Figure 17: Vase of Chertomlyk 4<sup>th</sup> century BC. (MINNS 1913: 160.)



Figure 18: Reconstruction of iron stirrup from Grave VII in Duulga-Uul. (ERDÉLYI 2000: 161.)

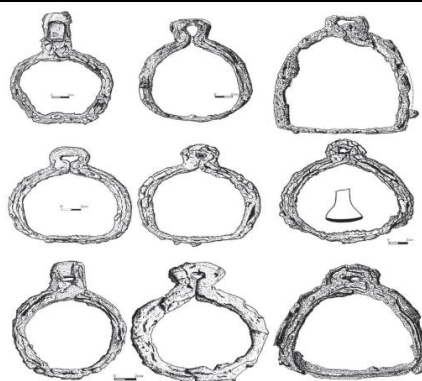


Figure 19: Changsha figurine. AD 4<sup>th</sup> century. (DIEN 1986: 50.)

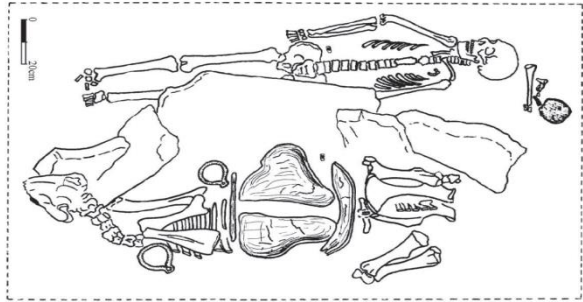


Figure 20: The stirrups of the Turkic monuments from Kochkor Valley, Kirgizstan. (ATLAS 2013: 536.)

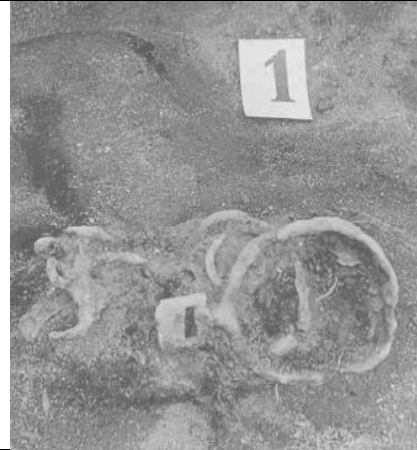


Figure 21: Turkic burial with a horse and stirrups from Kochkor Valley, Kirgizstan. (ATLAS 2013: 533.)

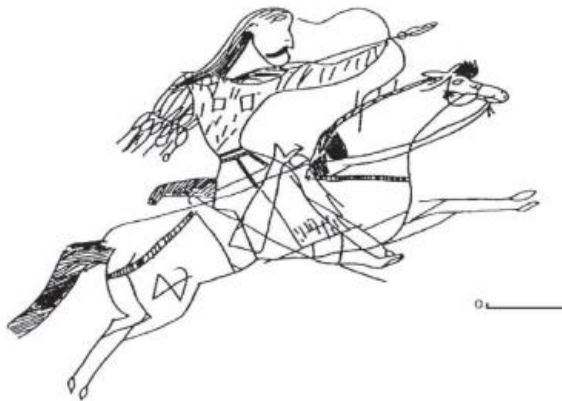


Figure 22: Naimaa-Tolgoi, Kurgan 1: Iron stirrups belong to the Türks. (ERDÉLYI 2000: 201.)



Figure 23: A bowman on horseback with stirrups. Petroglyphs of Valley Chaganki River, Altai. (ATLAS 2013: 618.)

Figure 24: Warriors of Astana: The cavalries using saddle and stirrups. (S. A. Komissarov, A. I. SOLOV'EV, 71.)





Figure 25: The first plaque belongs to date AD 310-320. The second one on the left dating 7<sup>th</sup> century the existence of the stirrups and the saddle is seen.

(<https://depts.washington.edu/silkroad/museums/shm/shmsasanian.html>)



Figure 26: Statue with Sogdian Inscription. C. 600 CE. Xiao Hongnagai (Xinjiang). (STARK 2009: 129.)



Figure 27: Statue of a Western Türk-Qagan. Tang (c. 705 CE.). Qianling (Shaanxi). (STARK 2009: 133.)

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