



CENTRAL ASIA DURING THE PERIOD OF THE TURKIC KHAGANATE

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Abstract: This article analyzes the social and economic life within the Turkic Khaganate, which ruled Central Asia during the early Middle Ages, how it was reflected in historical sources, and the significance and role of this period in the history of our country.

Keywords: Oguznama, Orkhon-Yenisei script, Kul Tigin inscriptions, Ashina, Argu, Oguz, Toquz Oguz, Otuz Tatar, Qarluq, Khitan, Tolis, Turk, Uyghur, Toqri (Tocharians), Quriqan, Duba (Tuba-Tuva), Ashin, Asan, Tuu, Bumin, Muqan Khan, Yabgu, Abruy, Xuanzang, "Issyk Inscription", Budun, Qara Budun, Beks, "Kurultai", Drone.

Historical Foundations and Origins

Numerous historical sources confirm that Turkic peoples have lived in vast eastern territories since ancient times, leaving behind a worthy cultural legacy. Reliable witnesses of this include esteemed Chinese sources, the famous "Oguznama," the Orkhon-Yenisei inscriptions, and the Kul Tigin monuments. Various Turkic tribes, such as the Ashina, Argu, Oguz, Toquz Oguz, Otuz Tatar, Qarluq, Khitan, Tolis, Turk, Uyghur, Toqri (Tocharians), Quriqan, and Duba (Tuba-Tuva), inhabited Altai, Tuva, and adjacent territories.

In the early 6th century, political processes intensified in the Altai region. At that time, the Rouran (Jujan) Khaganate ruled over present-day Mongolia and parts of northern China. During this period, the prestige of the Ashina clan rose among the Turkic peoples of Altai. Between 460–545, Asan and Tuu of the Ashina clan subordinated other tribes and founded a union of Turkic tribes in Altai. Tuu's son, Bumin, also conquered the Tiele tribe.

Formation of the Khaganate

Bumin fought to gain independence from the Rouran Khaganate and, in 551, defeated the Rouran Khan's forces and subordinated them. In 552, Bumin was proclaimed Khagan and founded a new state — the Turkic Khaganate. Its capital was the city of Otuken in Altai. The Khaganate quickly grew in strength and fame, launching several campaigns into China and capturing many of its territories. The Chinese kingdom was forced to pay an annual tribute of one hundred pieces of silk fabric to the Turkic Khaganate.





After Bumin Khan's death in 553, his eldest son, Muqan Khan (553–572), came to power. In 558, Muqan Khan dealt a final crushing blow to the Rourans, solidifying his state's rule over territories reaching as far as the Pacific Ocean. His uncle Istami (who held the title "Yabgu" — hero) expanded the Khaganate's territory to the west, capturing Jetisu, Kashgar, and other regions.

Central Asia and Internal Dynamics

Chinese sources state that during this period, there were nine independent principalities in the Zarafshan, Amu Darya, and Kashkadarya oases: Samarkand, Ishtikhon, Maymurg, Kesh, Nakhshab, Kushan, Bukhara, Amul, and Andkhoy. The principalities of Samarkand, Bukhara, Khwarezm, and Chach (Tashkent) were particularly independent. Coins minted by the Bukhar-khudats were in wide circulation.

However, constant internal conflicts and rivalries existed between these relatively independent principalities. This led to a decline in the living conditions of the local population. For example, in 585–586, an uprising led by Abruy (Toraman) broke out in Bukhara against the landed gentry and wealthy merchants. The forces of Khagan Tardu (Qorachurin) suppressed the uprising and severely punished the rebels. The system of governing subordinated territories through local rulers eventually weakened the Khaganate. Consequently, by the end of the 80s of the 6th century, the Turkic Khaganate split into two parts:

The Western Turkic Khaganate: Including Central Asia, Eastern Turkestan, and Dzungaria.

The Eastern Turkic Khaganate: Including the territory of Mongolia.

Economic and Cultural Life

In the 7th century, the Western Khaganate saw urban development and active trade and diplomatic relations with Iran and China. During the Tang Dynasty (618–907) in China, beneficial ties were extensively established with the Western Turkic Khaganate. Between 627 and 644, nine trade caravans were sent from Central Asia to China. The Chinese traveler Xuanzang, who traveled through the Khaganate's territories in the 630s, noted that places like Issyk-Kul, the Chu Valley, Chach, Samarkand, and Bukhara were crowded and prosperous.

In Western regions, social, economic, and cultural life was relatively higher compared to the Eastern lands. While the lower class was called budun or qara budun, the noble representatives were known as beks. The community was governed by the Khagan and a council of nobles called the "Kurultai". Agriculture, gardening, and viticulture flourished in Central Asia. Numerous dams, canals, and





reservoirs were built in the Fergana, Khwarezm, and Zarafshan oases. In Fergana and Sogdia, mining (gold, copper, iron) and metalwork were well-developed.

Heritage and Innovation

The Turkic-Runes, Orkhon-Yenisei script, and the Kul Tigin and Bilga Khagan monuments testify to the antiquity and diversity of Turkic written culture. The "Issyk script," discovered in 1970 near Almaty, traces the history of Turkic writing back to the 2nd–1st centuries BC.

Interesting facts about the Turkic Khaganate:

Strategic Communication: Turks used smoke and fire signals on hills as a "Drone-like" rapid alert system to detect approaching enemies.

The Ashina Legend: The legend states the Turks descended from a female wolf, symbolizing courage and freedom.

Legal System: The Toru (Law) implemented by Bilga Khagan was so perfect that Chinese sources described it as "working like an automatic force."

Military Mastery: Turkic cavalry could shoot arrows backward while galloping, a tactic that astonished Europeans.

Metallurgy: The Gokturks were such masters of iron that China called them the "State of Blacksmiths."

Martial Music: They went to battle with music called "Kos tuduk" (ancestor of the drum), designed to strike fear into enemies.

Conclusion

The Turkic Khaganate was one of the largest states of its time, significantly influencing relations between China, Iran, and Byzantium. This period served as a bridge preparing the ground for the First Renaissance in Central Asia. The statehood traditions, language, and cultural heritage left by the Khaganate are an inseparable part of the identity of modern Central Asian peoples. Without this period, the today's appearance, language, and political map of Central Asia would be entirely different.

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