

THE UIGHURS, THE KYRGYZ AND THE TANGUT (EIGHTH TO THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY)*

D. Sinor, Geng Shimin and Y. I. Kychanov

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Part One

THE UIGHURS IN MONGOLIA AND THE KYRGYZ

(D. Sinor)

The first mention of the Uighurs (under the name Hui-ho and various graphic variants) appears in Chinese sources and refers to the early seventh century A.D. when this people lived on the banks of the Selenga river and was subjected to the Türks. The Chinese viewed the Uighurs as the descendants of the Hsiung-nu, the dominant power on the steppe from

* See Map 2.

about 200 B.C. to A.D. 48. This may indeed have been the historical truth, but there is no way to substantiate it, since the Chinese sources tend to ascribe Hsiung-nu origin to any of the numerous steppe peoples with whom the Chinese had contacts over succeeding centuries. It is thus not surprising that the description given of the Uighurs by the *Chin T'ang-shu* [Old T'ang Annals] follows the traditional pattern of characterization of the steppe peoples:

They have no chiefs, no permanent dwellings; they wander in search of water and pasture. These men are of an evil disposition and cruel. They are excellent riders and archers and most rapacious. Brigandage is their livelihood.

More specific, and certainly trustworthy, is the information that the Uighurs were subjects of the Türks, who relied on them 'to govern the wild northern regions'.¹

Around 630, at a time when Türk power was on the wane, under the leadership of P'u-sa the Uighurs became more assertive. Although the Chinese characters used to write his name are identical with those transcribing the Buddhist term *bodhisatva*, there is no other indication that he or his family were Buddhists. On P'u-sa's death his son T'u-mi-tu assumed the title of Kaghan; he was murdered in 648. His son P'o-juan (for him, as for his father, we have names only in Chinese transcriptions) died some time between 661 and 663, leaving the reins of government to his sister who, defeated by the troops of the Chinese emperor T'ai-tsung, disappears from the stage. Nothing is said about the activities of the four Uighur chiefs whose names are known for the period between 680 and 741; their people, together with other tribes of the T'iêh-le confederation to which they belonged, lived within the borders and under the sway of the Eastern Türk empire.

In 744 the Karluk, Basmil and Uighur tribes formed an alliance to overthrow Türk rule. The victorious coalition was first headed by the Basmil Alp Bilge Kaghan, but he was soon eliminated by an Uighur-Karluk joint action. Shortly afterwards, it was the turn of the Karluk to be ousted, but they were still a force to be reckoned with and remained hostile to the Uighurs. The action undertaken by the three peoples should be labelled 'revolt' rather than 'invasion'. The first Uighur rulers considered themselves continuers of the Türk tradition, and claimed legitimacy by linking themselves with Bumin Kaghan, the founder of the First Türk empire. The difference separating Türks from Uighurs must have been purely political. As is clearly shown by the inscriptions commemorating the deeds of their great men, Türks and Uighurs spoke the same language, used the same runic-type script and lived within the same geographic boundaries. Were it not for their name, the Uighurs would be indistinguishable from the Türks. The Uighur state in Mongolia was, in fact, the Third Türk empire. Its first ruler, Kutlugh Bilge Kül Kaghan (744-7), and his son and successor El-Etmish Bilge Kaghan (747-59), also known as Bayan Chur, made a point

¹ Chavannes, 1903, p. 87.

of cultivating friendly relations with China. Uighur troops were instrumental in the T'ang reconquest in 757 of Lo-yang, which had fallen into the hand of the rebellious An Lu-shan. A year later, in recognition of his services, the Kaghan received for his wife the Princess Ning-kuo, daughter of Emperor Su-tsung.

We might pause here for a moment to direct our attention to a process of urbanization gaining strength among the Uighurs. The Shine-usu inscription – written in Uighur in 759 or 760 and celebrating the deeds of El-Etmish Bilge Kaghan – mentions two Uighur cities. One of these, located at the confluence of the Orkhon and Baliklig rivers, was the Kaghan's residence. It is usually referred to by its recent Mongol name, Karabalghasun. Its foundation probably goes back to the times of the Türk empire. The Shine-usu inscription also reports that El-Etmish Bilge Kaghan entrusted some Chinese and Sogdians with the building at the Selenga river of a city called Bay Baliq. The city of the Uighur Kaghan, most likely Karabalghasun, was described in some detail by the Arab traveller Tamīm b. Bahr, who visited it, probably in 821.² Located within a conurbation which included cultivated tracts, the town itself had twelve huge iron gates and must have been a bustling place. 'The town is populous and thickly crowded and has markets and various trades,' writes Tamīm b. Bahr about the city, though he does not give its name. The majority of its inhabitants were Manichaeans. One cannot establish with any certainty what prompted the Uighur rulers to engage in the building of cities. Of course, both of the two dominant foreign influences – Chinese and Sogdian – must have favoured this development, but, for reasons of prestige, the Kaghan might have felt the need for an official, fixed place of residence. He himself – so we are told – might have preferred to stay in a tent, though admittedly a luxurious one. Some sixty years after the decision to build Bay Baliq had been taken, Tamim b. Bahr would find the Kaghan's 'golden tent' at a distance of some 30 km from Karabalghasun.

From the marriage of El-Etmish Bilge Kaghan and Princess Ning-kuo issued Bögü Kaghan (759–79), possibly the central figure in Uighur history. Following in his father's footsteps, he gave substantial aid to the Chinese, once more recovering on their behalf the city of Lo-yang in 762, though at a price: the devastation wrought upon the city by the unruly Uighur troops. The story of their behaviour in China, which they were supposed to help, is a miserable record of brutality and destruction. It is to be observed that the Uighurs now held a position of vantage in regard to the Chinese empire that none of the other nomadic powers of Mongolia ever occupied. If the emperor was able to cope with his internal foes, it was because he could rely on the Uighurs.

Without any doubt, the most important event of Bögü Kaghan's stay in Lo-yang was his conversion by Sogdian religious to Manichaeism. In his subsequent actions, Bögüs Kaghan

² On Tamīm b. Bahr's journey, see Minorsky, 1948.

displayed the zeal usually shown by recent converts. An Uighur Manichaean text gives a highly idealized picture of the enthusiasm with which the Uighurs are said to have accepted their ruler's announcement of his conversion:

At that time when the divine Bögü Kaghan had thus spoken, we the Elect and all the people living within the land rejoiced. It is impossible to describe this our joy. The people told the story to one another and rejoiced.³

The most troublesome aspect of the Kaghan's conversion was that it resulted in the Sogdians gaining overwhelming influence in matters of policy. The above-mentioned text attributes to the Kaghan the promise: 'If you, the Elect, give orders, I will follow your words and requests.' Such an attitude might have justified the title *zahan-i Mani* (Emanation of Mani) given to Bögü Kaghan in a Pahlavi fragment,⁴ but was unlikely to impress either the shamans who felt that their influence was being threatened, or indeed the rank and file of a Turkic people of warriors who resented the arrogant meddling of a bunch of foreigners in the affairs of their state. Bögü Kaghan had fallen under the influence of Sogdians who were more interested in their own prosperity than in that of the state. According to the *Hsin T'ang-shu* [New T'ang History], the Sogdians' 'property flourished and they accumulated a very large amount of capital'. Ultimately, they overplayed their hand by attempting to induce Bögü Kaghan to invade China. When he remained impervious to the arguments put forward by his uncle Tun Bagha Tarkhan against such an adventurous undertaking:

Tun Bagha became annoyed and attacked and killed him and, at the same time, massacred nearly two thousand people from among the kaghan's family, his clique and the Sogdians.⁵

Uighurs and Sogdians had developed a commensalism that, most of the time, benefited both as long as the latter did not overstep the rules of prudence dictating that a parasite should not exploit its host to the point of death, for the destruction of the host entails its own death. Commensalism presupposes a moderation in greed by the parties involved that was not always displayed by the Sogdians. Following Tun Bagha's coup d'état in 779, some of them (one wonders whether these were the real culprits) had to pay dearly for their past actions, but the severe measures taken against the Sogdians produced only a temporary eclipse of their role. They were soon back, wheeling and dealing, acting as intermediaries between Uighurs and Chinese, self-appointed diplomats representing their own interests first of all. It should be remembered that, although Sogdians were instrumental in the spread

³ See Bang and Gabain, 1929, p. 8, lines 52–6.

⁴ Müller, 1912.

⁵ Mackerras, 1972, p. 89.

of Manichaeism among the Uighurs, international trade was typically their principal field of activity.

As with so many other features of Uighur political life, symbiosis with the Sogdians was inherited from the Türks. It will be remembered that under the First Türk empire, the Sogdians attempted to secure for themselves the monopoly of the silk trade, and with this aim in view they were ready to send to war none other than the Türks. There is no evidence that under the Uighurs attempts were made to sell silk directly to Byzantium, but it seems unlikely that the vast quantities obtained from the Chinese were absorbed by the internal market. To obtain silk, two ways were open for the Uighurs, and they made use of both. The most marketable commodity produced by the Uighur economy was, of course, the horse, for which there was a permanent demand among the Chinese military. The Uighurs were ready to provide the mounts in exchange for silk – a conventional transaction. But they were not satisfied with supplying a genuine want; they had recourse to what must be called forced trade, foisting on to the Chinese more horses than were needed by them and of lesser quality. In most instances, the Chinese sources give only the number of silk ligatures paid to the Uighurs but rarely indicate the horse/silk ratio. The *Hsin T'ang-shu* gives the following picture of this pseudo-trade as practised under Emperor T'ai-tsung:

The Uighurs took even greater advantage of their services to China by taking as a price forty pieces of silk for every horse they brought in as tribute. Every year, they sought to sell several tens of thousands of horses . . . The horses were inferior, weak and unusable. The Emperor gave them [the Uighurs] generous presents, wanting by this means to shame them, but they did not recognize this. They came again to the capital with 10,000 horses, but the emperor could not bear to place this burden on his people once again, so he paid for only 6,000 of them.⁶

There is reason to think that, though heavy, the burden was not as unbearable as the Chinese wanted the Uighurs to believe. According to their own records, between 780 and 829 the Chinese paid 2,012,000 pieces of silk to the Uighurs.⁷ If we reckon 40 pieces of silk per horse, the silk delivered by the Chinese would have sufficed for the purchase of only 50,300 horses over a period of almost half a century. Yet we know that trade was much more brisk, since under T'ai-tsung the number of horses to be imported officially was set at 10,000 per annum.⁸ The discrepancy may be explained by the Chinese habit of being in arrears with the payments, a practice greatly resented by the Uighurs. According to Uighur reckoning in

⁶ Mackerras, 1972, p. 87.

⁷ Mackerras, 1969, pp. 238–9.

⁸ Jagchid, 1989, p. 177.

781, the Chinese owed them 1,800,000 pieces of silk, corresponding to the price of 53,000 horses.⁹

An unpleasant and by no means negligible concomitant of the horse–silk trade was the overbearing, arrogant, unruly behaviour of the Uighur and Sogdian merchants in China. It led to numerous conflicts and, among the officials as well as the people, it left a lasting dislike of these greedy barbarians. It was to manifest itself to the detriment of the Uighurs and Sogdians once they ceased to be shielded by the might of the Uighur empire.

Traditionally, the Kaghan's leadership was dependent on what he could deliver to his followers, but none of the coveted goods were home-produced; they had to be obtained from or in China, either through loot or trade. Another way to satisfy the 'insatiable greed' of his entourage was to allow them to participate in the lavish embassies that were sent to the T'ang court with or without proper justification. In less than 100 years – between 745 and 840–116 such embassies came to China on the pretext of 'rendering tribute';¹⁰ some of them comprised more than 1,000 members, among them the wives of the more important dignitaries. The jockeying for a place in these diplomatic missions must have been intense. To some extent, the visits of privileged Uighurs and Sogdians to the splendour of the T'ang court were counter-productive; they whetted rather than satisfied the participants' appetite for luxury goods.

Let us now return to the reign of Tun Bagha Tarkhan, who ruled under the name or title Alp Kutlugh Bilge Kaghan (779–89) and did his best to remain on good terms with the Chinese. His was not an easy task, since Emperor Te-tsung (779–805) had no sympathy for the Uighurs, having been humiliated by them in his youth. Patient diplomacy and the advice of his counsellors slowly overcame the emperor's hostility and, as a token of renewed confidence, the princess of Hsien-an was given in marriage to the Kaghan in 787. Alp Kutlugh Bilge Kaghan died in 789, but the princess remained among the Uighurs until her death in 808, the Khātūn (consort) of four successive Kaghans. Te-tsung had good reasons to make conciliatory gestures towards the Uighurs; their help was sorely needed in the quasi-permanent conflict between the T'ang and the Tibetans. The two immediate successors of Alp Kutlugh Bilge Kaghan were murdered. A measure of stability returned only under the rule of A-ch'o, whose regnal title was Kutlugh Bilge Kaghan (790–5), and who was probably still a child on his accession to the throne.

At about this time, there appeared on the scene of Uighur history a new dignitary called the *ta-hsiang* (Grand Minister) or *ta-chiang-chiün* (Grand General) by the Chinese. He is probably identical with the *il ögäsi* (Glory of the Land/Nation) appearing in a Uighur text.

⁹ Mackerras, 1972, p. 93.

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 221–38.

There is clear evidence to show that, at least under Kutlugh Bilge Kaghan, effective power rested with the *il ögäsi*. It should not then come as a surprise that, at the death of the youthful Kutlugh Bilge Kaghan, the *il ögäsi* ascended the throne under the grandiloquent regnal title of Ai tängridä ülüg bolmish alp qutlugh ulugh bilgä *huai-hsin* Kaghan (795–805 or 806). The death of Kutlugh Bilge Kaghan spelled the end of the Yaghlakar dynasty, which had ruled ever since the establishment of the Uighur empire; the *Huai-hsin* Kaghan (to use the short form of his name) belonged to the Ädiz clan. There is some doubt concerning the very existence of his successor who, if the *Huai-hsin* Kaghan indeed ruled until 808, might be a ‘ghost’ created by the confusion of our sources.

The period of rule of Ai tängridä qut bulmish külüg bilgä *pao-yi* Kaghan (809–21), on the other hand, is quite well documented. It was during his reign that the trilingual (Chinese, Uighur and Sogdian) inscription of Karabalghasun was erected, bearing witness, *inter alia*, to a renaissance of Sogdian and Mani-chaeen influence among the Uighurs. It might be that this was one of the reasons why the Chinese – deeply distrustful of the Sogdians – refused the *Pao-yi* Kaghan’s request for an imperial bride, on the flimsy pretext that they could not afford the expenses of such a wedding.¹¹ The true cost of the marriage of a princess was estimated at 200,000 pieces of silk, the annual tax revenue of a large sub-prefecture of the south-east. It was the view of Li Chiang, president of the Ministry of Rites, that the benefits of a marriage alliance with the Uighur Kaghan would amply justify such expenditure.¹² By the time the emperor ceded to persistent Uighur demands, the Kaghan had died and, finally, Princess T’ai-ho became the bride of the new Uighur ruler, Kün tängridä ulugh bulmish küchlüg bilgä *ch’ung-te* Kaghan (821–4). The third princess to marry an Uighur ruler, T’ai-ho was to stay among the Uighurs for some 22 years, a pawn in the complicated end-game of Sino-Uighur relations. She became the wife successively of Ai tängridä qut bulmish alp bilgä *chao-li* Kaghan (824–32), murdered by his entourage, and of his successor Ai tängridä qut bulmish alp külüg bilgä *chang-hsin* Kaghan (832–9), who – menaced by an attack of the Sha-t’o tribes and by a conspiracy engineered by one of his ministers – committed suicide.

Uighur fortunes had sunk very low. Exceptionally heavy snowfalls, causing widespread famine, contributed to the disintegration of the Uighur body politic. The rule of Ho-sa (839–40) was too short to allow him to receive an appointed name. He lost his life when the Kyrgyz, who had been engaged for twenty years in a struggle with the Uighurs and were this time led by the renegade Uighur general Külüg Bagha, attacked and destroyed Karabalghasun, the Uighur capital. This sequence of events marks the end of the Uighur

¹¹ Chavannes and Pelliot, 1911–12, p. 282.

¹² Mackerras, 1972, p. 113.

empire of Mongolia, though mopping-up operations were to continue for some time. Two Uighur factions sought Chinese help. One of these was led by Ögä Kaghan (841–7), who had the support of thirteen tribes and in whom we must see the last legitimate Uighur ruler. There is a whiff of Shakespearian tragedy in the destinies of these men, their swords broken, seeking help from the Chinese who had never seen in the Uighurs anything but rapacious barbarians. Chinese efforts were limited to repeated attempts to rescue Princess T'ai-ho. Once she was safely back among her people, Li Te-yü, a distinguished civil servant of the T'ang, summarized well the policy to follow: 'Now that we have obtained the princess, we should do battle with the Uighurs again, exterminating them completely, so that none remain to cause later calamities.'¹³ The fall of the Uighurs, so often praised by the Chinese as their staunchest ally, caused no regret in China.

The Kyrgyz who put an end to the Uighur empire on the Orkhon represented a different type of civilization. Although their language was Turkic, fairly close to Türk and Uighur, the Kyrgyz chapter of the *T'ang-sku* (217B) describes them as strong and tall people, red-haired, white-faced and green-(or blue-)eyed, with a dislike for dark hair and dark eyes. The Persian historian Gardīzī, writing in the mid-eleventh century, confirms this description. Individuals with dark features were thought by the Kyrgyz to be the progeny of the renegade Chinese general Li-ling, who in the first century B.C. defected to the nomads. Unlike the Uighurs or the Türks, the Kyrgyz were not considered descendants of the Hsiung-nu by the Chinese. In fact, one of the earliest detailed mentions of the Kyrgyz (called Ch'ien-kun at that time) refers to their defeat in c. 49 B.C. at the hands of the Hsiung-nu ruler, the *shan-yü* Chich-chih.

The *T'ang-shu* remarks that the Ch'ien-kun – ancestors of the Kyrgyz called in T'ang times Hsia-ch'ia-ssu – were 'mixed Ting-ling'. This indication is of little help and has caused much confusion among superficial historians. It was assumed that the Ting-ling constituted the 'blond' element among the Kyrgyz. Probably the opposite is true since, in Maenchen-Helfen's words, 'there is not the slightest evidence for attributing to the Ting-ling the characteristics of the white race which the *T'ang-shu* gives to the Ch'ien-kun'.¹⁴ There seems to be general agreement that Ting-ling is the Chinese rendering of the same name which later appears in the form of T'ieh-lê, the designation of a tribal confederation to which, as we have seen, the Uighur (among other Turkic peoples) belonged. One could then speculate that the Turkic element was brought into the process of Kyrgyz ethnogenesis by the Ting-ling. (Archaeological publications – based on the acceptance of the unjustified theory proposed by historians – usually attribute to the Ting-ling the Europoid

¹³ Drompp, 1986, p. 300.

¹⁴ Maenchen-Helfen, 1939, p. 83.

component.) The population of the Tashtik culture (first century B.C.–fifth century A.D.) in the Yenisei valley was an amalgam of Europoids and Mongoloids, as is clearly shown by the clay death masks discovered. It is also beyond doubt that the Mongoloid component of the Tashtik population was superimposed upon the Europoid population which it had probably conquered. While it seems unlikely that the Kyrgyz adopted a Turkic language as late as the eighth century, it is certain that their language contained non-Altaic (Samoyed or Palaeoasiatic) elements, such as the name of a special type of iron.

Some aspects of their civilization clearly set the Kyrgyz apart from the rest of the Turco-Mongol inhabitants of the steppe. Thus, for instance (and the *T'ang-shu* makes a special point of this), when mourning, the Kyrgyz did not lacerate their faces. Also, the original title of their ruler was *a-je*, not in use by any known Inner Asian people. The title Kaghan came to be used only following the victory over the Uighurs. The description of their customs in T'ang times clearly shows that the Kyrgyz were a forest-dwelling people, very different in their lifestyle from the 'Hsiung-nu type' steppe-dwelling pastoral nomads. We are informed that, in their forests, the pine trees grew so tall that an arrow could not reach their peaks. Their land was marshy in the summer and covered with deep snow in the winter, so that the Kyrgyz could use skis (*mu ma*, or 'wooden horse') for the hunt. In the winter, when the cold was so severe that the rivers froze to half their depths, the Kyrgyz lived in huts covered with bark. Their tribute to the Chinese consisted of pelts. They practised tattooing. They were shamanists, and the shamans were called by their Turkic name, *gam* or *kam*. The early twelfth-century geographic treatise of Marvazī describes in some detail the doings of a shaman, and he notes that the Kyrgyz burn their dead.¹⁵ Gold, tin and iron could be found in their land, and the Kyrgyz were skilled in the manufacture of arms which they purveyed to the Türks in lieu of tribute. Chinese information concerning Kyrgyz prowess in the manufacture of arms is confirmed by archaeological finds and also by petroglyphs on which the representation of plate armour is clearly visible. The Kyrgyz used caparisons to protect their horses, and their pointed helmets are reminiscent of the 'lion helmets' used in T'ang China.

Without doubt, in the course of their early history, the Kyrgyz moved from west to east. At the time when the Hsiung-nu *shan-yü* defeated them, the Ch'ien-kun (as the Kyrgyz were then called) were located to the north-west of the Western Hsiung-nu and to the north of K'ang-chü. According to the *Han shu* [History of the Former Han] (Ch. 94B), in the middle of the first century B.C. the Ch'ien-kun lived at a distance of 7,000 *li* to the west of the Hsiung-nu headquarters. The location of K'ang-chü poses some problems – at some periods the name was applied to Sogdiana, at others to Samarkand itself – but it is beyond

¹⁵ Minorsky, 1942, p. 30.

doubt that it lay far to the west and, most probably, somewhat to the north of the T'ang-period country of the Kyrgyz. Muslim historians tend to place the Kyrgyz in the north-eastern extremity of the known world. According to the anonymous Persian geography, the *Hudūd al-ʿālam* [The Limits of the World] (A.D. 982), only China and the Eastern Ocean were east of the Kyrgyz, while to the north of them lay the 'Uninhabited Land of the North where people cannot live on account of the intensity of the cold'.¹⁶ The distance separating the Kyrgyz from the Chinese made any contact tenuous, and communications were made difficult and often cut off by the Türk or Uighur empires wedged between the two. According to the *T'ang-shu*, caravans needed 40 days to cover the distance separating Karabalghasun from the Kyrgyz country.

It is difficult to assess with any degree of certainty to what extent the Kyrgyz actually ruled over the ancient land of the Uighurs. For demographic as well as economic reasons – they were not numerous enough and they were not a typical steppe people – they did not fill the vacuum left by the disappearance of the Uighur empire. Although, perhaps for lack of any contender, nominal Kyrgyz rule over Mongolia lasted for about a century, their power base remained in the Yenisei region, in present-day Tuva, where was located their capital Kemjkath (uncertain reading). Savinov distinguishes five cultural groups within the Kyrgyz empire, namely those of Tuva; east Kazakhstan; the Gorno Altai; the Minusinsk basin; and the Krasnoyarsk region.¹⁷

From about 924 onwards, the Kitan had effective control of the land that used to be the centre of the Uighur empire. This is evidenced by the offer made to the Uighurs of Kan-chou by A-pao-chi (alias T'ai-tsu), ruler of the Kitan, to return to their former homeland. By then happily settled in their new country, the Uighurs declined the offer. The arrival of the Kitan and the withdrawal of the Kyrgyz from that region marks the end of Turkic preponderance in what was to become Mongolia.

¹⁶ Anon., 1937, p. 96.

¹⁷ Savinov, 1984.

Part Two

THE UIGHUR KINGDOM OF KOCHO

(*Geng Shimin*)

After the destruction of the Uighur Khanate in 840, some tribes migrated west to Gansu, where they established the Uighur kingdom of Ganzhou (later, in 1026 to be conquered by the Tangut. The Yughur nationality in the vicinity of Jiuquan, Gansu province, are their present-day descendants). Another important branch (fifteen tribes) migrated westward to the area of Beshbalik (in Chinese called Beiting; its ruins are at Hubaozi in Jimsar county, Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region) north of the T'ien Shan mountain range, crossed the T'ien Shan southward and occupied the Turfan basin where the Uighur kingdom of Kocho was established (c. 860–1284). Shortly afterwards the Uighurs expanded their power to include the Yanqi (Argi, Karashahr) and Qiuci (Kuci, Kuchar) areas. Historical records concerning the Uighur kingdom of Kocho are very sparse. The Chinese records are fragmentary because the chaotic situation in China during the period of the Five Dynasties or Ten Kingdoms (907–60), and the weak government of the Sung dynasty (960–1279), did not allow much attention to be paid to the Western Regions. Arab and Persian sources had little interest in a land that was not yet Islamic and the records written in Uighur were mostly destroyed after the introduction of Islam into the Tarim basin.

The Uighur name 'Kocho', originating from the Chinese 'Gaochang', refers to the city as well as to the area. The ruins of the ancient city of Gaochang, with its imposing walls, stand 40 km east of the Turfan county administrative centre. The Turfan region, located in the north-eastern part of the Tarim basin, was an important line of communication between East and West and had since ancient times been a key post on the Silk Route.

In the north of the area lies the T'ien Shan, with its snow-capped peaks such as Bogda and Qara-uchin. The streams and rivers, formed by melting snow, provided abundant water that was conducted to the fertile farmlands by underground aqueducts called by the Persian term *kārīz*. As early as the second century B.C., Turfan became a prosperous oasis with a developed agriculture, producing wheat, barley, rice, maize and beans as well as cotton,

grapes, melon, Hami melon (a kind of musk melon), sesame, and so on. To the north of the T'ien Shan, there are vast tracts of excellent natural (alpine) pasturelands, where large herds of horses, sheep, cattle and camels can graze. There are also many wild animals such as Asiatic wild ass, yak, large-headed sheep, Mongolian gazelle and antelope.

The earliest identifiable inhabitants of the Turfan area were probably the Yüeh-chih (Juzhi), speaking a particular Indo-European language formerly called in the scholarly literature 'Tokharian A'. During the period of the Northern and Southern Dynasties (420–581), a large number of Chinese entered the Turfan area from inland China. One of them named Jujia of Jincheng, Gansu, founded the Ju dynasty (493–640), which lasted for nearly one and a half centuries. Chinese civilization had a great influence upon the local people. According to Chinese sources, during the fifth–sixth centuries, in the Turfan area the 'barbarian' script (i.e. the local script) as well as Chinese characters were used. In schools, the Chinese classics like *The Book of Songs*, *The Confucian Analects* and *The Book of Filial Piety* were taught, but they were all recited in the native ethnic language. Judging from Turkic manuscripts dating from the eighth century, it seems that even before the Uighur immigration, there was a Turkic presence in the Turfan region. The arrival of large numbers of Uighurs accelerated the Turkicization process. There was also a substantial Sogdian population living in the area.

The original inhabitants of Karashahr and Kucha also spoke Tokharian (those living in Karashahr speaking dialect A, those of Kucha using dialect B). From ancient times, Karashahr and Kucha, two city-states on the northern edge of Tarim basin, have had a developed economy and culture. The Chinese pilgrim Hsüan-tsang (600–40) gives a vivid description of Kucha in his famous *Da Tang xi-yu-ji* [Records of Travels to the Western Regions in Great T'ang] (Ch. 1):

The Kuci state measures over 1,000 *li* [1 *li* = 500 m] from east to west and more than 600 *li* from south to north. The capital has a circumference of 17–19 *li* and produces millet, wheat, rice, grapes, pomegranates, pears, peaches and apricots; gold, copper, iron, lead and tin are mined. The climate is mild and the manner of the people is polished. Their script originated in India, but a few changes have been made. Their music and dance are famous. They wear brocade or plain cloth, cut their hair short and wear turbans. They use gold or silver coins and small copper coins as currency . . . There are more than 100 Buddhist temples, and more than 5,000 monks and novices, and all belong to the Sarvastivadin sect of Hinayana.

The indigenous inhabitants of all these three areas were Europoids. In the words of the *Pei-shih* [Annals of the Wei Dynasty] (Ch. 97), 'The people of the states west of Turfan all have deep-set eyes and high noses.'

After the Uighurs moved into these three areas, a process of fusion of different ethnic groups began through intermarriage. Because the Uighur and other Turkic groups enjoyed

both political and numerical superiority, the indigenous population was gradually Turkicized and the Uighur language triumphed over the native Tokharian language and became a kind of lingua franca in these areas. The languages of the indigenous population gradually fell into disuse and died out, though the indigenous substratum had a great influence on the Uighurs in ethnological, cultural and linguistic respects. Under the influence of the relatively advanced economic system and culture of the native people, the Uighurs gradually gave up their nomadic life and turned to a settled, urban or agricultural existence and created in Kocho a brilliant civilization.

The sovereign of the Uighur kingdom of Kocho took the title *idiqu* (< *idūq qut*, His Holy Majesty). It seems that this title was taken from another Turkic tribe, that of the Basmil, who lived in the Beshbalik area before the Uighur immigration. To foreign countries, the Uighurs of Kocho called their land 'Great, Good-Fortunate State'. Under the *idiqu* there were high-ranking officials such as nine ministers, *ülchi*, *tarqan*, *sängün*, *tutuq* as well as many officials of middle and lower rank such as the *älchi*, *bägi*, and so on. Further, there were freemen, craftsmen and merchants. In the countryside, the landlords possessed extensive farmlands and water resources, with a class of poor peasants and tenant farmers beneath them. Uighur civil documents show that the remains of a slave system existed.¹⁸ The Manichaean and Buddhist monasteries also owned extensive farmlands, with many dependent households.

As far as relations with neighbouring countries were concerned, in the east, after the Liao dynasty (907–1125) and the Sung dynasty (960–1279) were established, there were frequent diplomatic and commercial contacts between them and the Uighurs of Kocho. In the west, relations between the Karakhanids (c. 960–1213, founded by the Turkic Karluk) and the Uighurs of Kocho were strained. Although both sides were Turkic, speaking a common language (with only some dialectal differences) and at the outset using the same Uighur script, the former were Muslims while the latter were Buddhists. Because of the difference in religion, the two sides were extremely antagonistic. The *idiqu* of Kocho put up a determined resistance to the expansion of the Karakhanids; until the thirteenth–fourteenth centuries the influence of Islam could not be felt beyond Kucha.

At the beginning of the twelfth century, Kocho came under the rule of the Western Liao (1124–1211), who installed a *jianguo* (supervisor). In the early thirteenth century (1209), the Uighur king Barchuk Art Tegin voluntarily submitted to Chinggis Khan, founder of the Mongol empire. Because of this, his realm was particularly well treated by Chinggis, and preserved its original boundaries.

¹⁸ Geng Shimin, 1984, pp. 7–18.

In the second half of the thirteenth century, the Haydu-Duwa rebellion, lasting for nearly forty years, gave the Uighur kingdom of Kocho its death blow. In 1270 the summer capital, Beshbalik, was taken by the rebels, and the Uighur *idiqu* retreated to Kocho city. Some years later, in 1284, he was forced to flee to Yongchang in Gansu. By this time, the kingdom existed in name only; its domain was incorporated into the Chaghatay Khanate.

In A.D. 982 the Sung envoy Wang Yande had visited Kocho. His account in the *Shi gaockang ji* [Records of an Embassy to Kocho] constitutes the most important historical source for the study of the Uighur kingdom during this period. He gives a vivid description of Kocho in the *Sung shi* [History of the Sung dynasty] (Ch. 490):

The area has no rain or snow and is extremely hot, and when the hottest season arrives the inhabitants all move into caves dug in the earth . . . Their houses are whitewashed, and water from Jinling [Golden Mountain] flows through them and is circulated through the capital city to water the gardens and turn mills. The area produces the five cereal grains, but it lacks buckwheat. The nobles eat horse-meat and the common people eat goat or fowl. In music they make much use of the *pipa* [a kind of four-stringed lute] and the *konghou* [an ancient plucked instrument with seven strings like the harp]. They produce sable, cotton and brocaded cloth. They are fond of archery and riding. The women wear oiled caps which are called *sumuzhe*. They use the calendar promulgated in the seventh year [719] of the reign of Kaiyuan of the T'ang dynasty . . . They are fond of excursions and always take along musical instruments. There are more than fifty Buddhist temples with inscribed boards given by the T'ang imperial court. In the temples are kept *The Buddhist Tripitaka*, *Rhyming Book of T'ang*, *The Dictionary of Chinese Characters*, *The Chinese Buddhist Dictionary* . . . and other works . . . There is an imperial library which holds imperial letters and orders from Tang Taizong (627–49) and Tang Xuanzong (712–56), which is very carefully locked. In addition, there are Manichaeian monasteries and Persian monks . . .

When Wang Yande arrived in Kocho, the Uighur king Arslan Khan was away in his summer quarters north of the T'ien Shan, leaving his maternal uncle to take care of state affairs. Thus Wang and his party crossed over the T'ien Shan to go to Beshbalik. On the road, he saw many herds of horses belonging to the royal family grazing on the steppes which stretched as far as 100 *li*. Horses of different colours were divided into separate herds for grazing, an indication that the Uighur upper classes still maintained the old, traditional nomadic habits.

According to the accounts of Uighur sources, on ceremonial occasions the Uighur king sat on a golden chair (*örgin*) placed on a platform (Uighur *taucang* < Chinese *daochang*) and decorated with pearls and jewels. He wore a red robe and a crown (Uighur *didim* < Greek *diadéma*).

Among the Uighurs who moved into the Turfan region, the Uighur script gradually replaced the Old Turkic so-called 'runic' alphabet. As urban life and trade developed, the

use of the Uighur language and script became general. Not only were a large number of religious (Manichaeism, Christian and Buddhist) works translated into Uighur, but the language was also extensively used in everyday life, which was strongly influenced by Chinese culture. Regarding the calendar, for example, the Uighurs used the Chinese system of the *tiangan* (Ten Heavenly Stems) as well as the *dizhi* (Twelve Earthly Branches) to designate years. In this period, Uighur borrowed many Chinese words, such as *mākā* or 'ink' (< Medieval Chinese *mak*), *kuin* or 'scroll, volume' (< M. Chin, *kuian*), etc.

As early as the time of the Uighur Khanate in Mongolia, in 762, Manichaeism was accepted by the Uighur nobility. After their migration to the Turfan region, Manichaeism was still maintained for a period among the Uighurs, as shown by the many Manichaean mural paintings as well as Uighur Manichaean manuscripts (often decorated with beautiful miniatures) found in the Turfan area. Nestorian Christianity also had followers among the Uighurs. In the Nestorian sites of Turfan, a fresco depicting the rites of Palm Sunday has been discovered. In addition, several Uighur fragments, some Nestorian writings and a story about three Persian Magi visiting Bethlehem have been unearthed. The 'Iranian monks' mentioned by Wang Yande must refer to Nestorian priests. The translation into Uighur of Aesop's *Fables* might also be related to the spread of Nestorianism among the Uighurs.

The religion that spread most widely among the Uighurs, however, was Buddhism. Under the influence of the original inhabitants, the Uighurs gradually converted to that religion and large numbers of Buddhist classics were translated into Uighur. During Buddhist festivals, at mass gathering places around temples, a variety of activities such as storytelling, as well as dramas with Buddhist content, were performed. The 'banquet with dramatic performance' attended by Wang Yande, and the discovery of the primitive Buddhist drama the *Maitrisimit* written in Uighur testify to this point.¹⁹ Many Buddhist sites, grottoes (such as Bezeklik, Tuyok, Kizil and Kumtura), as well as the large quantity of Uighur manuscripts, further indicate that Buddhism flourished extensively in the Uighur kingdom. Since the 'more than fifty Buddhist temples' in Turfan were given boards inscribed in Chinese, indicating that Buddhist works were kept there, we may conclude that Chinese Buddhism had a profound influence on Uighur Buddhism. Having originally spread from Xinjiang to inland China, Buddhism now returned to the area from China.

Because of their conversion to Buddhism, the Uighur nobility and even the common people took to building temples, making statues, painting frescoes and copying sutras as a kind of charitable and pious deed (in Uighur called *buyan* < Sanskrit *bunya*). These are precious works of art representing the high level attained in art and culture by the Uighurs at

¹⁹ Gen Shimin and Klimkeit, 1988.

that time. The frescoes give a vivid picture of the daily life of the Uighurs. Their residences are enclosed by walls; flowers and trees are planted in the courtyards. Men and women hold long-stemmed flowers in their hands. Men have garments and headdresses in T'ang style, they wear half-length boots and have various daily utensils hanging on their waistbands. Women wear long gowns with T'ang floral patterns in Transoxanian style.

If the mural paintings depicted the lifestyle of the rich families, the Uighur commoner's life was reflected in a variety of civil documents written in Uighur. They are prime sources for the study of the socio-economic condition of the Uighur kingdom of Kocho. Through these documents (up to now several hundred of them have been discovered), we can clearly see how peasants and farm labourers were exploited by the landlords.

In the Uighur kingdom of Kocho, large numbers of Buddhist works were translated into Uighur, mostly from the ancient Karashahr-Kuchaean language as well as from Chinese. During the Yüan or Mongol dynasty (1279–1368) some were also translated from Tibetan. The surviving corpus of Uighur Buddhist texts shows that nearly all the main Buddhist works (including sutras, *vinayas* and *abhidharmas*) were translated into Uighur. Important among them were Mahayana works such as *The Golden Light Sutra*, *The Lotus Sutra*, *The Garland Sutra* and Sthiramati's *Commentary on the Abhidharmakosa*, all translated from Chinese. But there are also Hinayana texts, such as the *Maitrisimit Nom Bitig*, translated from 'Tokharian A' and many fragments of *Āgamas*. Also during the Yüan dynasty, many tantric works were translated from Tibetan and Chinese. Among the Uighur Buddhist translators, Master Singu Säli is worthy of particular mention. Born in Beshbalik, he lived in about the tenth–eleventh centuries. From the Chinese he translated into Uighur *The Golden Light Sutra*, *The Biography of Xuan-zang* and many other Buddhist works. His translations read smoothly, his vocabulary is rich; he not only had a good command of classical Chinese, but was a master of his own mother tongue; it seems that he also knew Sanskrit.

The coexistence of various religions resulted in a fusion of different faiths. For example, in Uighur Buddhist texts the Indian gods Brahma and Indra are called by the Manichaeic names Azrua and Hormuzd respectively, indicating a degree of fusion between Buddhism and Manichaeism. Furthermore, a type of calendar written in Sogdian and used by the native Manichaeic believers indicates an assimilation of Sogdian, Chinese and Uighur cultural elements. The name of every weekday was written in Sogdian and then each name was supplemented by the transcribed Chinese names of the 'Ten Heavenly Stems' such as *jia*, *yi*, *bing*, and so on. Then again there were written in Sogdian the twelve animal names, such as mouse, ox, tiger, rabbit, and so on, which were used by the Uighurs. Finally, the names of the Chinese *wuxing* (five elements), metal, wood, water, fire and earth, were translated into Sogdian and matched with two-day periods.

In sum, it may be said that during almost 400 years of the Uighur kingdom of Kocho's existence, great achievements in the social, economic and cultural areas can be credited to the Uighurs. At the same time, the period was characterized by further fusion in ethnic, linguistic, religious and cultural elements within Uighur society.²⁰

Part Three

THE TANGUT HSI HSIA KINGDOM (982–1227)

(*Y. I. Kychanov*)

The active rivalry between Tibet and China from the seventh to the ninth century altered the destinies of the Qiang and Xianbei populations occupying the area of the modern provinces of Qinghai and Sichuan. The Tuyühun state of the Xianbei, which had lasted for more than 300 years, was destroyed by the Tibetans; and some of the Dangxiang, a people of Tibetan-Burman ethnic origin living in the Sunpan region in north-western Sichuan, moved north under the pressure of the Tibetans, eventually reaching the Ordos. In the ninth century, the ruling clan of the Dangxiang – better known to European scholars by their Mongol name, the Tangut – became firmly established in the centre of the Ordos with their capital in the town of Siachou (in the western part of the modern Heng Shan district of Shanxi province). The centre of the Ordos, known as the Land of the Five Regions, had acquired almost full independence during the tenth century. The Tangut population formed an absolute majority there and the consolidation of the independence of the region with its Tangut population contributed, first, to China's breakup into a number of states during the period of the Five Dynasties and, second, to the emergence in the north of the powerful Kitan Liao state which supported the ruling Tangut house of Toba in its striving for independence.

The unification of China under the Sung dynasty in 960 naturally raised the question of what would happen to the Tangut possessions of the Toba. When, in the year 982, the Sung court attempted to bring those regions under its control, one of the members of the ruling Tangut Toba clan, Jiqian, openly opposed China and, following the example of the

²⁰ For the genealogy of the kings of the Uighur kingdom of Kocho, see Geng Shimin and Hamilton, 1981, pp. 10–54.

independent Kitan state, began the struggle to establish a Tangut state. He banked on conflict between the Liao and the Sung, and this proved to be justified since in 989 the Kitan court gave Jiqian the hand of a Kitan princess and recognized him as Wang of the Hsia state. In 997 Jiqian succeeded in establishing his authority over the area of the Five Regions. In the year 1002 the Tangut captured the town of Linchow (the modern town of Lingwu in the Ningxia-Huizu Autonomous Region). Some time at the end of the tenth century or the beginning of the eleventh (1001 according to the *Sung shi*) the term Hsi Hsia began to be employed to designate the Tangut state. The new state could only expand to the west and south-west, although there was quite a large ethnically similar Dangxiang (Qiang) population in the areas of China to the east of Hsi Hsia bordering on Jiqian's domain and in the southern Liao regions bordering on Hsi Hsia. These regions could not be wrested by force from the Sung and the Liao. Throughout the first third of the eleventh century, the Tangut therefore waged war to the west.

Jiqian was killed during a war with the Tibetans in the year 1004. His successor Li Deming, realizing that without peace with China it would be difficult to achieve any success in the west, concluded a peace treaty with the Sung in 1006. He agreed to accept from the Sung the post of *tzedushi* (military governor), thus acknowledging himself to be in Chinese service, and received the title of *Wang Xiping* (Pacifier of the West). The treaty of 1006 between Hsi Hsia and the Sung was, however, a sworn treaty which signified Sung recognition of the Tangut state or, as modern Chinese historians have written, 'the Sung emperor Shen Zong recognized the special position of Li Deming'.²¹ Li Deming began to prepare for official acceptance of the title of emperor. In 1016 he declared his father Jiqian emperor posthumously and in 1028 declared his son as heir to the imperial throne and his son's mother as empress. Xingqing, the modern town of Yinchuan (Ningxia-Huizu Autonomous Region), was declared to be the state's new capital.

Peace with China and the support of the Liao enabled the Tangut to conduct successful wars against the Tibetans and the Uighurs. In 1028 territories including the towns of Lanzhou (Wuwei) and Hangchou (Chane) and the modern province of Gansu were added to Hsi Hsia. In 1036 the Hsi Hsia dominions were extended further westwards to the area of modern Dunhuang and the edges of the Hami oasis. The territory of the Tangut state included the entire province of Gansu in its western part, the western *aymaks* of the modern Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region located to the south of the Gobi desert, the Ala Shan and the Helan Shan as well as the entire area of the Ningxia-Huizu Autonomous Region and the western regions of the modern province of Shanxi in the Ordos. The border with the Kitan ran along the southern edge of the Gobi desert and the northern branch of

²¹ Zhong Kan et al., 1979, p. 25.

the Yellow River, where it forms the Ordos bend. The western branch of the Yellow River was entirely within Hsi Hsia territory but the border with China did not extend as far as its eastern branch, as Sung forces not only denied the Tangut access to the river but even, in 1067, took from them the town of Suizhou (the modern town of Suide in Shanxi province).

In the year 1136, following the defeat of the Jurchen by the Sung, the Tangut incorporated into their state the area of the modern town of Xining in the province of Qinghai. Altogether this was a vast territory, containing fertile land that was suitable for agriculture (the valley of the Yellow River, the valleys of the rivers Heitui and Xining, the north-western edge of the loess plateau) and good pastureland on the plains of the Ordos and Ala Shan and in the mountain regions. The present-day climate of these regions is continental with a cold winter, a very hot summer and insufficient precipitation. There is evidence, however, that the climate was milder and more humid in the period from the eleventh to the thirteenth century. Rice, cotton and apricots were grown in a number of regions within the territory of the Hsi Hsia. The mainstay of the economy consisted of agriculture and the raising of livestock. The country was self-sufficient in grain, with the possible exception of rice, and exported livestock and livestock products. Camels and horses from Hsi Hsia were particularly highly valued. The extensive mountain regions provided a reliable source of ores and the country experienced no shortage of iron although, according to some evidence, the Tangut lacked sufficient quantities of copper. Salt extraction was a flourishing activity and salt from the Ordos lakes was exported to China.

In the year 1031 Li Deming died and was succeeded by his son, Yuan Hao. The first Tangut emperor and a reformer, he was to play an outstanding role in the ultimate consolidation of the Tangut state deep in the interior of Asia. In 1032 Yuan Hao abandoned the use of the Sung reign titles, used for the purpose of chronology, and adopted as the title of his reign *Xiandao* (Clear Path). This was an important step towards the formation of the imperial system of administration and the first of Yuan Hao's reforms, of which there were ten according to historians. The second reform was the decree of 1033 concerning the introduction of a single hairstyle (*tufa*) for all men. This was the Kitan male hairstyle in which most of the hair on the head was shaved off, leaving only a forelock and locks on the temples. This was an important political act as a single hairstyle (similar to the later Manchu requirement for all Chinese adult males to wear pigtailed) was a symbol of the submission and unity of all the sovereign's subjects.

Under the third reform, the area of the country's capital was elevated to the status of *fu* (conventionally, a 'department'), the same status as the capitals of Liao and Sung. The city was renamed Xingqing (Celebration of the Ascendancy). At the same time, central government institutions on the Chinese model were introduced: a state secretariat (*chunzhu*)

for the administration of civil affairs; a privy council (*shumi*) for the command of the army and the conduct of military matters; and a censor's office (*yushitai*), an organ of control. The Tangut did not introduce the system of 'six ministries' (*liu bu*) adopted in Liao, for example, but the ministries or departments established by Yuan Hao met all the requirements for the household administration and record-keeping of the imperial court; for the economy, especially agriculture and livestock-raising; and for the maintenance of law and order throughout the country. The fifth reform introduced uniforms for officials. These reforms were enacted in 1033 and were followed three years later by a precise definition of the system of compulsory military service (the sixth reform), the ordering of the country's administrative subdivisions into twelve military-political districts (the seventh reform) and the introduction, also in 1036, of an original Tangut script.

The Tangut language was tonal and rich in homonyms. The Tangut therefore devised a logographic-syllabic hieroglyphic script. This script looked very unlike Chinese, but its resources were based on the Chinese writing system and the characters were constructed using the six methods for the formation of characters laid down by Chinese philology of the period. Chief among these were the ideogram (*huii*) and the phonogram (*hsing shen*) methods. This eighth reform was not only the most important event in the cultural history of the Tangut people but also a milestone in the cultural history of East and Central Asia. During the previous stage in the cultural history of East Asia, the Koreans, Japanese and Vietnamese merely adopted the Chinese script, perhaps introducing some of their own indigenous characters and methods of transcribing their mother tongue, but the tenth to the twelfth century saw the Kitan, the Tangut and the Jurchen adopting the resources of Chinese writing to create their own original scripts. The invention and introduction of the script led directly in 1038 to another event of enormous cultural significance extending beyond the limits of Tangut culture, when a special group of thirty-two Buddhist monks was entrusted with the translation of the Buddhist canon into the Tangut language. The ninth and tenth reforms were also cultural in nature. In 1037 Tangut (the Tangut's own self-appellation was *Mi-nyag*) and Chinese schools were established; the year was also marked by the introduction of Tangut music to the court as official music for ceremonial purposes in the belief that 'the wise ruler should conform to popular customs'.

On 10 November 1038 Yuan Hao officially declared himself emperor and bestowed posthumous imperial titles on his grandfather, Jiqian, and his father, Li Deming. Since the Tangut state organized itself as an empire on the Chinese model during the reign of Yuan Hao, who was also the first openly to adopt the title of emperor, a number of contemporary historians have put the date at which the Tangut Hsi Hsia state was first established at 1032 (the year in which Yuan Hao was enthroned) or 1038 (the year in which he took the title

of emperor). His assumption of that title created a new situation in East Asia and in east Central Asia. A third Son of Heaven appeared alongside the Sung and Liao emperors. The Sung emperor recognized the imperial title of the Liao emperor and, by the Xianyuan treaty of 1005, Sung China paid the Kitan a sizeable tribute under the guise of ‘assistance’. The recognition of one more Son of Heaven would have further undermined Chinese views of universal monarchy and the exclusive position of the Son of Heaven on Earth. The Sung court therefore refused to recognize the imperial title of Yuan Hao. This led to the Tangut–Chinese war of 1040–4.

The war demonstrated that neither side could count on a definitive military victory. The title became the subject of negotiations which turned on whether Yuan Hao would adopt a traditional title (*kaghan*, *shan-yü*) rather than the Chinese imperial title of *huang-ti*. Matters were further complicated by the interference of the Kitan, who threatened the Sung in 1042 and forced China to increase the payments to Liao. Having obtained what they wanted from the Sung, the Kitan also began to threaten Hsi Hsia. In the circumstances, Hsi Hsia and the Sung concluded a peace agreement whereby Yuan Hao renounced the use of the title of *huang-ti* (emperor) in the international arena and in relations with China, retaining the imperial title (*utszu* in the Tangut language) within the boundaries of Hsi Hsia. The Sung court recognized him as *chou* (sovereign) and paid an annual tribute of 255,000 units of silk, silver and tea. Yuan Hao acknowledged his status as ‘junior’ or, as the translation has it, ‘vassal’ (*chen*), and received a seal from the Sung emperor. Although the Hsi Hsia state preserved its actual independence, the outcome of the war ultimately favoured the Sung.

A final peace with the Sung had still not been concluded when Yuan Hao was drawn into a war with Liao. China, for which the Kitan state represented the main enemy, occupied a position in the Tangut–Kitan war which, on the whole, was more favourable to Hsi Hsia. The Tangut inflicted a military defeat on Liao and the two sides made peace in 1045. In January 1048 Yuan Hao was killed. There followed a period in the history of the Tangut state, during the minority of the emperors Liangzu (1048–67), Pinchang (1067–86) and Qian-shun (1086–1139), when power was held by empress–regents and the Lian clan to which the mothers of Pinchang and Qianshun belonged. China attempted to exploit the internal disturbances in Hsi Hsia in order to destroy the Tangut state. Of the three major wars between the Sung and Hsi Hsia (1069–72, 1081–6 and 1096–9), the war of 1081–6 proved the most serious for the Tangut state. An army of over 300,000 invaded the territory of Hsi Hsia. Nevertheless, the overall outcome of the war did not favour the Sung and, according to one source, ‘the Sung forces perished ingloriously (*Sung shi*, Vol. 486, p. 3792). In 1094 the young Emperor Qianshun mounted something resembling a coup d’état

and destroyed the Lian clan, restoring to power the imperial clan of Toba (the Tangut Weimin or Ngwemi).

The economy and culture of the Tangut state began to flourish from the beginning of the twelfth century. To a certain extent, this was due to the emergence of a new power to the north-east, that of the Jurchen, which contained the activity of Liao and attracted the attention of the Sung as China hoped to use the Jurchen to destroy the Kitan. The destruction of Liao in 1125, the subsequent fierce struggle between the Sung and the Jurchen, and the emergence of the Jurchen Chin state with which Hsi Hsia managed to establish friendly contacts, led to the flowering of the Tangut state in the middle and second half of the twelfth century during the reign of Qianshun's son, Emperor Renxiao (1139–93), who was half-Chinese by birth.

The problem of Hsi Hsia's 'own path' was finally resolved during the reign of Renxiao. Under Yuan Hao the concept of their 'own path' had been expressed in the establishment of the Tangut state's ideology on the twin pillars of Buddhism and the copying of the principles of the Chinese state system. This was accompanied by propaganda advocating their own path as opposed to the Tibetan and Chinese paths. Chinese official and bureaucratic customs (ritual, clothes) were openly rejected in favour of Tangut customs. Under Yuan Hao's successors, the empress-regents and their supporters inclined towards Buddhism and the reduction of Chinese influence. In contrast, the ruling house, after recovering real power, demonstratively returned to Chinese ways. Qianshun assigned equal status to Buddhist and Chinese influences in his policy but Renxiao attached greater importance to the Chinese Confucian model in state administration. The cult of Confucius was officially adopted in Hsi Hsia in the year 1146. Orders were given to construct Confucian temples in all regions of the country and Confucius was venerated, receiving the homage due to an emperor; he was accorded the title of Emperor Wenxuan. Confucian canonical texts were industriously translated into Tangut. Buddhism also continued to develop actively during the reign of Renxiao but could no longer claim to be the principal state religion. It was assigned a role as preserver of the well-being of the dynasty. In the history of the Tibeto-Burman peoples there were three major states: Tibet, Burma and the Tangut state. Two of these states chose Buddhism as their sole ideology and developed as theocratic states. This did not happen in the case of the Tangut state, which was able to choose its 'own path' in this area. The main reason was the proximity of Hsi Hsia to China, whose institutions exerted an overpowering influence on the Tangut.

The Tangut state was multinational in the modern sense. The peoples forming the bulk of its population were the Tangut (self-designation, Minyag), Chinese, Tibetans and Uighurs. There was no difference in the rights enjoyed by these peoples in the area of

public life since in terms of hierarchical precedence, the official with the higher rank was always considered senior. Only among officials of the same rank was the Tangut always considered senior. The codex of the Tangut state, a 20-volume collection of the country's laws amounting to 1,460 articles, came into force during the reign of Renxiao. The text, which has been preserved to the present day, testifies to the highly developed legal system of the Tangut state. While Tangut law developed along the lines of Chinese law (as did Korean, Japanese and Vietnamese law), like those legal systems it exhibited certain original features.

Tangut society was made up of people with and without personal freedom (*pkhinga*, or men without personal freedom, and *nini*, or women without personal freedom). Free people were divided into those who served ('those of rank' in Tangut terminology) and those who did not serve ('ordinary people' in Tangut terminology). Members of the ruling dynasty of the Ngwemi clan and the emperor's kin occupied a particular position in society. According to Chinese law, the aristocracy had no rights deriving from their origin but it is thought that there were a number of Tangut clans/families, membership of which, while it did not constitute an entitlement to additional legal rights, nevertheless ensured respect and preference in state service. The nucleus of the ruling class consisted of the emperor's clan, his relations and the greater part of the Tangut bureaucracy. Attached to them were the rich 'proprietors', landowners and livestock owners who were not in state service. They exploited the slaves (*pkhinga* and *nini*) and ordinary peasants to whom they evidently leased land. The trend towards the establishment of tenancy relations, which was also very evident in the neighbouring state of Sung China, was possibly dominant. The landowners paid a land tax in grain, hay and brushwood and performed compulsory labour for the state. Land, livestock and other belongings were either the property of individuals or of the sovereign (the state). In accordance with the traditions of Chinese law, certain restrictions were sometimes placed on the sale of land by landowners, especially with regard to the choice of purchasers. Irrigation played a major role in agriculture. The service responsible for the maintenance of the canals was state-run, and these canals were repaired and built by people working under the system of compulsory labour. The length of the period of service depended on the amount of land held by the worker. Livestock-raisers paid a tax in livestock, wool and milk products. Depending on the number of their livestock, they supplied both horses and military equipment, or military equipment alone for their army service. The army was divided into regular and auxiliary forces who provided support for the activities and guaranteed the fighting efficiency of the regulars. The auxiliary troops may have included engineers.

The twelfth century saw the flourishing of Tangut culture. The entire *Tripitaka*, preserved to the present day in material from the dead town of Kara-Koto (rediscovered in 1909 by P. K. Kozlov) and in a small number of texts from the period of the Mongol Yüan dynasty, was translated into Tangut. Printing by means of wood engraving developed within the country and a proportion of what was printed were state texts produced by a special Printing Office. Although Buddhist painting developed under a strong Chinese and Tibetan influence, it none the less retained an independent identity. Various types of Tangut dictionaries have been preserved to the present day: the Tangut were proud of their mother tongue, literature and sayings. In addition to the Buddhist canon and the Confucian classics, Chinese military treatises and a number of moralizing texts were translated into Tangut. It may be assumed that there was a fairly high level of literacy among the population of Hsi Hsia, particularly among officials and, more generally, among people connected with state service (for which literacy was essential) or with Buddhist communities. Literate people were apparently bilingual (with a knowledge of Tangut and Chinese) and information has survived indicating that a knowledge of three languages (Tangut, Tibetan and Chinese) was required of Buddhists. A clear strain of patriotic pride in their culture and state is evident in the works of Tangut authors.

During the reign of Renxiao's successor, Chunyu (1193–1206), a new threat appeared to the north of the Tangut state, the power of Chinggis Khan. At the end of the twelfth century, the Tangut intervened in the internal struggles of the Mongols and it was possibly for this reason, as well as their obvious weakness in comparison with the Jurchen state of Chin, that Hsi Hsia was the first state against which the Mongols conducted campaigns outside Mongolia. They devastated the western regions of the Tangut state. Defeat in war against the Mongols cost Chunyu his throne. He was succeeded by Anquan (1206–11). The Mongols attacked Hsi Hsia again in the winter of 1207–8 and in 1209 laid siege to the capital of the Tangut state. The Tangut endeavoured to establish a military alliance against the Mongols, requesting aid from Chin, but they received no assistance. Anquan secured peace by acknowledging himself to be a vassal of Chinggis Khan and by giving him his daughter in marriage. He saved the country but lost his throne. His successor Eunxu (1211–23) was drawn into a war with Chin by the Mongols in the year 1214. That war lasted until 1224 and, although it was not conducted intensively, it none the less appreciably weakened the forces of both states in the face of the Mongol onslaught. In 1217 the Mongols again besieged the capital of the White High Great State of Hsia (such was the splendid official title of the Tangut state) but the siege dragged on and they left after demanding that the Tangut should take part in Chinggis Khan's westward campaign. The Tangut refused and Chinggis swore to settle his score with them on his return from the campaign. In the spring

of 1226 the main force of the Mongol army, led by Chinggis Khan in person, fell upon Hsi Hsia. In the autumn of 1227 the Mongols accepted the capitulation of the last ruler of Hsia and swiftly executed him. The downfall of Hsia coincided with the death of Chinggis Khan himself and the population of Hsi Hsia was therefore massacred with particular brutality.

Tangut culture perished with the Tangut state and the process leading to the disappearance of the Tangut as a people was initiated. The Mongols replaced the Tangut state with a Tangut region and the capital of Hsia was renamed Ningxia ('Peaceful Xia' in Chinese). The Mongol prince who ruled the region of Tangut at the end of the thirteenth century was a follower of Islam and made every effort to convert the population under his control to that religion. Various peoples who settled in the Tangut region adopted Chinese as their lingua franca, accepted Islam and formed a unified group of Chinese-speaking Muslims. During the Ming dynasty they developed into the ethnic and religious group of Muslims in north-west China which to the present day constitutes the core of the population of the Ningxia–Huizu Autonomous Region of the People's Republic of China.