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ARTICLE

# The Tang legacy on the Silk Road during the Uighur era: urbanisation in the eastern Tianshan region during the ninth to thirteenth centuries

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## Abstract

Tang expansion in the early seventh century brought about a series of changes to the eastern Tianshan region, including the incorporation of the region into the imperial postal relay and defence system. Important structures, including cities for the soldiers and other immigrants from Tang territory, along with fortresses and relay posts, were established along the major routes in the region, especially on the northern slopes of the Tianshan range. However, the era after the decline of the Tang is not as well known, due to a lack of contemporary sources. This article, based on a comprehensive analysis of documentary and unearthed materials, discusses a previously unacknowledged process of urbanisation in the region during the Uighur era. Uighur immigrants, originally nomads on the Mongolian steppe, occupied not only the cities, but also the garrisons and other infrastructure established by the Tang. As a result, urban settlements were established at sites that had previously served military purposes. Clusters of new cities emerged in the region, especially on the northern slopes of the Tianshan, which had long been part of the nomadic cultural zone. The sedentary and mercantile culture of the Uighurs played an important role in this process, serving as an impetus for economic prosperity along the eastern section of the Silk Road between the Tang and Mongol–Yuan eras.

**Keywords:** eastern Tianshan; Silk Road; Tang; Uighur; urbanisation

## Introduction

The Tang era, along with the later Mongol–Yuan era, is generally considered the heyday of the Silk Road, in part thanks to the relative abundance of contemporary literary sources on Central Asia. However, due to a relative lack of literary sources, the era after the decline of the Tang is much less well known. As the Tibetans encroached on Tang territory in the Gansu Corridor after the An Lushan Rebellion (755–63), the direct connections to Anxi 安西 and Beiting 北庭 (in what is now Xinjiang) were cut off. Thereafter, information on Central Asia in Chinese sources is fragmentary and scarce, leaving the following history to a great extent in darkness. After a series of battles with the Tibetans in the Tianshan region, the Uighur Khaganate finally took control of the former Tang territories of Beiting and part of Anxi at the beginning of the ninth century.[1] The collapse of the

[1] T. Moriyasu 森安孝夫, 'Zōho: Uiguru to toban no hokutei sōdatsusen oyobi sonogo no seiiki jōsei ni tsuite 増補: ウイグルと吐蕃の北庭争奪戦及びその後の西域情勢について [On the war at Beiting between the Uighurs and the Tibetans and the consequent situation in the Western Region (enlarged and revised version)]',

Uighur Khaganate in 840 triggered a mass migration of Uighurs from the Mongolian steppe and their subsequent settlement in the eastern Tianshan region.

The Uighur occupation of the major cities in the region, such as Xizhou 西州 (Uighur (Uig.) Qočo < Chinese (Chin.) Gaochang) and Beiting (Uig. Bešbalïq), is recorded in various historical sources. The decipherment of unearthed manuscripts has resulted in the attestation of additional Old Uighur toponyms, which have been identified as phonetic transcriptions of the earlier Chinese names for cities in the Turfan Basin. This article, however, discusses the fact that the Uighurs not only settled in former Tang cities, but also founded a number of new settlements in the region. Indeed, the Uighur era witnessed an unprecedented process of rapid urbanisation in the eastern Tianshan region. The urbanisation on the northern slopes of the Tianshan is particularly worth noting, since nomadic culture had long been dominant in the area, even when it was Tang territory. Many of the new urban settlements were established on the foundation of walled sites that had primarily served military purposes under the Tang. In contrast to the major oasis cities that existed before the Tang era, the military sites that evolved into cities during the Uighur era are a unique legacy left by the Tang.

## The transition of the eastern Tianshan region during the Tang era

Before the seventh century, envoys and travellers from states in northern China normally travelled west using the routes along the northern and southern rims of the Tarim Basin. In contrast, due to its population of nomadic tribes and historical domination by steppe empires, the route along the northern slopes of the Tianshan was not recorded as a regular east–west route until the early seventh century. Pei Ju 裴矩 (d. 627), the Sui official in charge of trade with Sogdian merchants in Zhangye, listed it for the first time as a major route connecting Dunhuang and the Western Regions, running through the territory of the Turkic-speaking nomadic Tiele 鐵勒 tribes, as well as the court of their overlord at the time, the Western Türk Khaganate.[2] Recorded here for the first time in a Chinese dynastic history as one of the major routes, it was by that time dominated by a nomadic steppe empire.

Following the defeat of the Eastern Türk Khaganate on the Mongolian steppe in 630, the Tang began marching westwards, incorporating Yiwu (Hami), Gaochang (Turfan), and Bešbalïq (modern Jimsar County, Changji Prefecture, Xinjiang) into its territory. After suppressing the rebellion of Ashina Helu 阿史那賀魯 (the last ruler of the Western Türks) in 657, the Tang extended its direct military control over the entire Tarim Basin and the northern slopes of the Tianshan, where the Western Türks had previously dominated. Along with relocating the Anxi protectorate to Kuča and installing the four garrisons deep in the Tarim Basin,[3] the Tang 'opened up routes and installed postal

*Ajia bunka shi ronsō* アジア文化史論叢, vol. 3 (Tokyo, 1979); T. Moriyasu, *Tōzai Uiguru to Chūō Yūrashia* 東西ウイグルと中央ユーラシア *[Eastern and Western Uyghurs and Central Eurasia]* (Nagoya, 2015), pp. 203–74. For a French version, see T. Moriyasu, 'Qui des Ouigours ou des Tibétains ont gagné en 789-792 à Beš-Balïq?' *Journal Asiatique* 269 (1981), pp. 193–205. See also Ch. I. Beckwith, *The Tibetan Empire in Central Asia* (Princeton, 1987), pp. 153–57.

[2] See Pei Ju's preface to his *Xiyu tuji* 西域圖記 'Map and Record of the Western Regions' preserved in his biography in the *Suishu* 隋書 *[History of the Sui]* (Beijing, 2019), 67, p. 1772.

[3] Initially established in Kuča, Khotan, Kashgar, and Karashahr, the four garrisons were fiercely contested by the Tibetans, who were also expanding into the Western Regions at this time. In 679, when the Tang regained the control of the region, they established a garrison at Suyab (near Tokmak, Kyrgyzstan) in place of the earlier one at Karashahr. On the basis of unearthed manuscripts and tomb epitaphs from Turfan, Wang Xiaofu has revealed more information on the history of the Four Garrisons during the period 670–92, when the Tang lost and regained the control three times. See Wang Xiaofu 王小甫, *Tang, Tubo, Dashi zhengzhi guanxi shi* 唐、吐蕃、大

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stations' for travellers in this region.[4] In 692, when the Tang finally recaptured the four garrisons from the Tibetan empire, they left an unprecedented 30,000 soldiers there,[5] ushering in an era during which the Tang occupied the Western Regions with massive standing armies. In 702, they also stationed a standing army in Beiting, establishing another protectorate specifically to strengthen the military control of the northern route along the Tianshan.[6] With the influx of settlers from Tang territory, infrastructures for defence, transportation, and daily life developed. The route along the northern slopes of the Tianshan, once under the control of nomadic powers (as noted by Pei Ju several decades before), was gradually transformed into an area intended for sedentary Chinese travellers. To guard and support this route, a system of cities, garrisons, fortresses, and postal stations was established around Beiting, where Kehan Futu cheng 可汗浮圖城 'the *stūpa* city for the Khagan', a headquarter for the Türks, was located.[7] In a note under the entry for Beiting, the 'Treatise on Geography' in the *Xin Tangshu* records not only the cities (counties) within the territory of this protectorate, but also the large and medium-sized garrisons—*jun* 軍 and *shouzhuo* 守捉[8]—along the route:

> 60 *li* to the west of the west adjunct city of Beiting is located the medium garrison of Shabo 沙鉢. Further (west) is located the medium garrison of Pingluo 憑洛. 80 *li* further west is located the medium garrison of Yele 耶勒. 80 *li* further west is located the medium garrison of Juliu 俱六. 100 *li* further, one reaches Luntai 輪台 county. 150 *li* further is located the medium garrison of Zhangbao cheng 張堡城. Further on, one crosses the Li yi de jian 里移德建 river and 70 *li* further is located the medium garrison of Wuzai 烏宰. Further on, one crosses the Baiyang 白楊 river and 70 *li* further is located the large garrison city of Qingzhen 清鎮. Further on, one crosses the Yeye 葉葉 river and 70 *li* further is located the medium garrison of Yehe 葉河. Further on, one crosses the Heishui 黑 水 river, and 70 *li* further is located the medium garrison of Heishui. 70 *li* further is located the medium garrison of Donglin 東林, and 70 *li* further the medium garrison of Xilin 西林. Passing the Huangcao bo 黃草泊 lake, a large desert, and a small Gobi desert, one crosses the Shiqi 石漆 river, goes over the Cheling 車嶺 ridge, and reaches Gongyue 弓月 city.[9]

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食政治關係史 *[The History of Political Relations between the Tang Dynasty, Tibet and Arab in Central Asia (634–792 A. D.)]* (Beijing, 2021), pp. 68–93.

[4] In Chinese 'Kaitong daolu, bie zhi guanyi' 開通道路, 別置館驛; see *Tang huiyao* 唐會要 *[Compilation of Key Documents of the Tang]* (Shanghai, 1991), 73, p. 1576. For a detailed survey of the establishment of the routes and the postal system in the newly conquered Western Regions, see Rong Xinjiang 榮新江, 'Tangdai Anxi duhufu yu sichou zhilu: yi Tulufan chutu wenshu wei zhongxin 唐代安西都護府與絲綢之路——以吐魯番出土文書為中心 [The Anxi protectorate and the Silk Road of the Tang time: focused on the manuscripts unearthed from Turfan]', *Qiuci xue yanjiu* 龜茲學研究 *[The Qiuci (Ancient Kuča) Study]*, 5 (2012), pp. 154–61.

[5] *Jiu Tangshu* 舊唐書 *[Old History of the Tang]* (Beijing, 1975), 198, p. 5304.

[6] For a detailed survey of the measures that the Tang took to control the Western Regions, see Zhang Guangda 張廣達, 'Tang mie Gaochangguo hou de Xizhou xingshi 唐滅高昌國後的西州形勢' [On the situation after the Tang's subjection of Gaochang]', *Tōyō bunka* 東洋文化, 68 (1988), pp. 114–52; Zhang Guangda, *Wenshu, dianji yu Xiyu shidi* 文書、典籍與西域史 *[Manuscripts, Literatures and the History and Geography of the Western Regions]* (Guilin, 2008), pp. 114–52.

[7] The area where the city of Beiting was established is crucial, not only for the control of the east–west route along the northern slope of the Tianshan, but also for the north–south route across the mountains to the Turfan Basin. Due to the crucial location, a city (or cities) had existed there long before Tang times. For the strategic position of Kehan Futu cheng going back to the time of the Türk empire and discussions of its relation to Beiting under the Tang, see A. Shimazaki 嶋崎昌, 'On Pei-t'ing 北庭 (Bišbalïq) and K'o-han Fu-t'u-ch'eng 可汗浮圖城', *Memoirs of the Research Department of the Toyo Bunko*, 32 (1974), pp. 105–9.

[8] The 'Treatise on the Army' in the *Xin Tangshu* 新唐書 *[New History of the Tang]* designates the garrisons at the frontiers as *jun*, *shouzhuo*, *cheng* 城, and *zhen* 鎮 in decreasing size; see *Xin Tangshu* (Beijing, 1975), 50, p. 1328. In the following text, I tentatively refer to *jun*, *shouzhuo*, and *zhen* as large, medium-sized and small garrisons, respectively.

[9] *Xin Tangshu*, 40, p. 1047.

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Additionally, under the entry for Yizhou, the *Xin Tangshu* notes two crucial locations along the westward route to Beiting: the medium garrison of Dushan 獨山 and Pulei 蒲類 County.[10] The installation of a series of garrisons along the route reflects the fact that the region was located at the intersection between the nomadic population and the settled Tang immigrants.

## The Uighur occupation of the Tang sites

As Uighur refugees fled to the eastern Tianshan region after the downfall of their Khaganate in 840, they took over the major cities there, including Xizhou (Qočo), Beiting (Bešbalïq), and Yanqi (Solmï), resulting in further prosperity in the following era.[11] Thanks to the decipherment of manuscripts dating to the Uighur era, it is clear that smaller cities of the Tang in the Turfan Basin were also taken over by the Uighurs. As already noticed by Takao Moriyasu, Old Uighur and Chinese manuscripts dating prior to the eleventh century sometimes describe the whole Turfan region as 'the 22 cities'.[12] Since the number of cities in that region was exactly 22 at the end of the Qu Dynasty of Gaochang (501–640, the last local dynasty to rule in Turfan) and during the early-Tang era that followed,[13] it seems that the Uighurs took over all the cities in the Turfan Basin. An increasing number of Old Uighur toponyms have been identified as phonetic transcriptions of the Chinese names of these cities during Tang or earlier times.[14] Evidence for the overall Uighur occupation of Tang cities in Turfan can also be found in the Chinese text 'Memo on the Merit of Building a Stupa', dating to the early period of the West Uighur Kingdom, in which the governor of the entire Turfan region was referred to as being 'in charge of the affairs of the four garrisons [Chin. *fu* 府, in the Garrison Millita system (Chin. Fubing zhi 府兵製)] and the five counties of Xizhou' [in line (*l.*) 4].[15] The numbers and names of the military and administrative units are identical to those during Tang times.

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 1046.

[11] The two capital cities, Qočo and Bešbalïq, both of which have been surveyed and excavated several times, are good examples for understanding major cities in the West Uighur Kingdom. According to the third round of national surveys on historical relics in China (2007–09), the perimeters of the outer wall of Qočo is *circa* 5,000 metres long, whereas that of Bešbalïq is 4,596 metres long; see Xinjiang Weiwuer zizhiqu wenwu ju 新疆維吾爾自治區文物局 (ed.), *Xinjiang gucheng yizhi* 新疆古城遺址 *[Remains of Ancient Cities in Xinjiang]*, *Xinjiang Weiwuer zizhiqu disanci quanguo wenwu pucha chengguo jicheng* 新疆維吾爾自治區第三次全國文物普查成果集成 *[Compilation of the Results from the Third Round of National Surveys on Historical Relics]* (Beijing, 2011), pp. 342, 393. For the plan of the city of Qočo, see A. Grünwedel, *Bericht über Archäologische Arbeiten in Idikutschari und Umgebung im Winter 1902–1903* (München, 1906), fig. 2; A. Stein, *Innermost Asia: Detailed Report of Explorations in Central Asia, Kan-su and Eastern Iran*, vol. 3 (Oxford, 1928), Plan 24. For the plan of the city of Bešbalïq, see N. S. Steinhardt, 'Beiting: city and ritual complex', *Silk Road Art and Archaeology* 7 (2001), figs 1–3, pp. 224, 228–30.

[12] T. Moriyasu, 'Tonkō to Nishi Uiguru ōkoku: Turufan kara no shokan to okurimono o chūshin ni 敦煌と西ウイグル王国—トゥルファンからの書簡と贈り物を中心に [Dunhuang and the West Uyghur Kingdom: the historical background of the letter, P 3672 Bis, sent from Turfan]', *Tōhō gaku* 東方学 74 (1987); Moriyasu, *Tōzai Uiguru to Chūō Yūrashia*, pp. 341–42. See also T. Moriyasu, 'On the Uighur Buddhist society at Čiqtim in Turfan during the Mongol period', in *Splitter aus der Gegend von Turfan: Festschrift für Peter Zieme anläßlich seines 60. Geburtstags*, (eds.) M. Ölmez and S.-Ch. Raschmann (Berlin and Istanbul, 2002), pp. 167–68.

[13] Wang Su 王素, *Gaochang shigao: Jiaotong bian* 高昌史稿—交通編 *[A Draft History of Gaochang: Volume on Communications]* (Beijing, 2000), pp. 53–57.

[14] For a general summary, see D. Matsui, 'Old Uigur toponyms of the Turfan oases', in *Kutadgu Nom Bitig: Festschrift für Jens Peter Laut zum 60. Geburtstag*, (eds.) E. Ragagnin and J. Wilkens (Wiesbaden, 2015), p. 294.

[15] The manuscript was collected in a ruined Buddhist temple in Tuyuq, Turfan by a local peasant in the 1980s and is now housed in the provincial museum of Xinjiang (Ürümqi). For the text and the dating, see Rong Xinjiang 榮新江, '"Xizhou Huihu mounian zao fota gongde ji" xiao kao 〈西州回鶻某年造佛塔功德記〉小考 [On the "memo on the merit of building a stupa" of the West Uighur time]', in *Geng Shimin jiaoshou bashi huadan jinian*

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The rise of the Uighur chief Pugu Jun 僕固俊 from Beiting in 866 is recorded in various Chinese sources; it must have been an influential event at a time when the Chinese dynasty did not have direct connection with the Western Regions. Scholars generally accept this as the beginning of the West Uighur Kingdom, centred in Qočo and Bešbalïq (For the geographical setting of the kingdom, see Figure 1.)[16] Although Moriyasu has already thoroughly surveyed and compared the different records,[17] it is still worth discussing that contained in the *Zizhi tongjian*, which cites the 866 report by Zhang Yichao 張議潮, the governor of the Guiyi jun 歸義軍.[18] His report lists Xizhou, Beiting, Luntai, and Qingzhen as examples of cities taken by Pugu Jun.[19] It is not surprising that the pre-eminent cities of Xizhou and Beiting are mentioned in this report, but the references to Luntai and Qingzhen are of particular interest. Luntai—one of the three counties under the Beiting Prefecture during Tang times—was also the site where the Jingsai jun 靜塞軍 standing army was stationed.[20] Qingzhen, as mentioned above, was a large garrison city of the Tang, where a standing army should have been stationed.[21] Together with Beiting, the centre of the protectorate, where a third standing army (Hanhai jun 瀚海軍) was stationed, Luntai and Qingzhen were the most important military sites under the Beiting protectorate during Tang times. The record in the *Zizhi tongjian* for the year 866, almost 80 years after the region had passed from Tang to Uighur control, suggests that Luntai and Qingzhen had ongoing significant roles in the region. It is convincing evidence that, in addition to the major cities, the Uighurs also took over the counties and even military sites of the Tang in the eastern Tianshan region (see Figure 2).

The same information can also be gleaned from the newly edited Old Uighur 'annals'.[22] Composed in the Mongol era, they record historical events that took place in the early days of the West Uighur Kingdom.[23] Sections R and S record the migration of a certain

*wenji* 耿世民教授八十華誕紀念文集 *[Festschrift for the Eightieth Birthday of Professor Geng Shimin]*, (eds.) Zhang Dingjing 張定京 et al. (Beijing, 2009), pp. 183, 189.

[16] T. Moriyasu, 'Uiguru no seisen ni tsuite ウイグルの西遷について [On the Uighurs' migration to the west]', *Tōyō gakuhō*, 59.1+2 (1977); Moriyasu, *Tōzai Uiguru to Chūō Yūrashia*, p. 292; Hua Tao 華濤, *Xiyu lishi yanjiu (ba zhi shi shiji)* 西域歷史研究 (八至十世紀) *[Study on the History of the Western Regions (from the Eighth to the Tenth Century)]* (Shanghai, 2020), p. 82; P. Zieme, 'The West Uigur Kingdom: views from inside', *Horizons*, 5.1 (2014), p. 2; Fu Ma 付馬, *Sichou zhilu shang de Xizhou Huihu wangchao: 9–13 shiji zhongya dongbu lishi yanjiu* 絲綢之路上的西州回鶻王朝: 9–13 世紀中亞東部歷史研究 *[The West Uighur Kingdom on the Silk Road: Study on the History of Eastern Central Asia during Ninth–Thirteenth Century]* (Beijing, 2019), pp. 100–5.

[17] Moriyasu, 'Uiguru no seisen ni tsuite', pp. 286–90.

[18] Guiyi jun ('Return to Allegiance Army', 848–1036), a *de facto* independent state founded in Dunhuang by the local Chinese landlords, remained a nominal vassal of the Tang until its demise. Due to its proximity to the eastern Tianshan region, it became a main source of information on the West Uighurs for the Chinese dynasties. For a brief history of Guiyi jun, see Rong Xinjiang 榮新江, *Eighteen Lectures on Dunhuang*, (trans.) I. Galambos (Leiden and Boston, 2013), pp. 40–46.

[19] *Zizhi tongjian* 資治通鑒 *[Comprehensive Mirror in Aid of Governance]* (Beijing, 2011), 250, pp. 8235–36.

[20] *Xin Tangshu*, 40, p. 1047.

[21] The army was very likely the Qinghai Jun 青海軍 mentioned in a note under the entry for Beiting in the 'Treatise on geography' in the *Xin Tangshu*, *ibid.*

[22] Housed in the Chinese Academy of Cultural Heritage with the shelf number xj222-0661.09, it was published in coloured facsimile in 2009, but the information on its origin and the finding site has not been released. For the text edition, see T. Zhang and P. Zieme, 'A memorandum about the king of the *On Uygur* and his realm', *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, 64.2 (2011), pp. 129–59. Another folio belonging to other parts of the text has been edited by the same authors; see T. Zhang and P. Zieme, 'A further fragment of old Uigur annals', *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, 66.4 (2013), pp. 397–410.

[23] The editors of the manuscript have dated the events to the tenth or eleventh century without detailed argumentation; see Zhang and Zieme, 'Memorandum about the king', p. 129. I have argued that the events should be dated to the second half of the ninth century—the years immediately following the founding of the West Uighur Kingdom by Pugu Jun; see Fu Ma, 'Xizhou Huihu wangguo jianli chuqi de duiwai kuozhang: Zhongguo wenhua yichan yanjiuyuan cang xj222-0661.09 hao Huihu wenshu de lishixue yanjiu 西州回鶻王國建立初期的對外擴

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**Figure 1.** The geographical setting of the West Uighur Kingdom. Source: drawing by the author on a Google Earth map.


**Figure 2.** Uighur cities in Turfan Basin and on the northern slopes of Tianshan. Source: drawing by the author on a Google Earth map.

nomadic people, 'the Six Tatar', from the realm of the Khitans ('Qïtay') to that of the West Uighurs during the reign of their first ruler (i.e. in the early years of the kingdom).[24] This event can be connected with the pressure that the Khitans exerted on nomadic tribes

張——中國文化遺產研究院藏 xj222-0661.09 號回鶻文書的歷史學研究 [The expansion of the Uighur kingdom of Qocho in its early years: a study on the manuscript xj222-0661.09 housed in the Chinese Academy of Cultural Heritage]', in *Xiyu wenshi* 西域文史 *[Literature and History of the Western Region]*, vol. 8, (ed.) Zhu Yuqi 朱玉麒 (Beijing, 2013), pp. 145–62; Fu Ma, *Sichou zhilu shang de Xizhou Huihu wangchao*, pp. 125–32. Despite disagreement over the exact time, the general dating to the early time of the West Uighur Kingdom has been well accepted.

[24] Zhang and Zieme, 'Memorandum about the king', pp. 139, 143.

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during their early expansion from their home base on the south-eastern edge of the Mongolian steppe. During the years of Guangqi 光啟 (885–88), the Khitan king Qinde 欽德 took advantage of the chaos in the Tang when the defence along the northern frontier was empty, conquering many tribes, such as the Tatars (Chin. *Dada* 達靼), the *Xi* 奚, and the *Shiwei* 室韋.[25] The immigrant 'Six Tatar' nomads were initially settled 'down (from) Bay Taγ as far as Qum Sängir',[26] namely the belt that lies along the eastern rim of Dzungaria,[27] the gateway from the Mongolian steppe to the eastern Tianshan region. Later, 'they flushed into the thriving cities of the Uighur khan, taking them as their cities and settling down'.[28] These cities would be located within the territory of the West Uighurs, in the eastern Tianshan region. In the following section W, the annals record: 'As soon as they left their fine homes where they used to live, they came (to this region, taking it) as their homes for a long (stay), went and settled down in the lower (region) of Yangï Balïq.'[29] Given the reference to Yangï Balïq—a city located on the northern slopes of the Tianshan—we can further locate the aforementioned cities in the same region. Since there were only three counties in this region during Tang times, it is likely that many of the 'thriving cities', including Yangï Balïq ('new city'), were either newly founded or had previously been Tang garrisons. A record by Qiu Chuji 丘處機 and his disciples more than three centuries thereafter confirms the latter. In the early thirteenth century, when the West Uighurs had recently submitted to the Mongol empire, the Taoist master (who was on a journey to Central Asia at the invitation of Chinggis Khan) visited their capital city, Bešbalïq. The local Uighurs introduced the city as Beiting from Tang times and revealed that 'many of the frontier cities from Tang times still exist'.[30]

## From garrison sites to urban settlements

This section discusses the transformation of Tang-era garrison sites into urban settlements, or even major cities, under the Uighurs—something not previously noted by scholars. This transformation may be an even better indicator of the development in this region under the Uighurs than the prosperity of major cities such as Bešbalïq and Qočo.

### *From Chiting garrison to Čiqtïn city*

There was already a civilian settlement in the oasis of Čiqtim during the Uighur era, where the modern town of Qiketai (七克台 < modern Uig. Čiqtim) is located. In Uighur manuscripts, this settlement is referred to as *Čiqtïn* (> modern Uig. Čiqtim)—a phonetic transcription of Chin. Chiting 赤亭, the name of the garrison set up on the same site in Tang times.[31] Moriyasu has carried out a thorough survey of Uighur manuscripts unearthed from Čiqtim, illustrating many aspects of life in this civilian settlement during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.[32] However, his assumption that a town already existed in Čiqtim before the Uighurs arrived[33] needs to be revised here.

[25] *Jiu Wudaishi* 舊五代史 *[Old History of the Five Dynasties]* (Beijing, 2016), 137, p. 2130.
[26] Section T; see Zhang and Zieme, 'Memorandum about the king', p. 143.
[27] *Ibid.*, p. 148.
[28] Section V; see *ibid.*, p. 143.
[29] *Ibid.*, p. 143.
[30] Chin. 'Tang zhi biancheng, wangwang shang cun' 唐之邊城，往往尚存; see Wang Guowei 王國維 (ed. and comm.), *Changchun zhenren xiyouji zhu* 長春真人西遊記注 *[Notes on Changchun Zhenren's 'Journey to the West']*, in *Wang guowei quanji* 王國維全集 *[The Complete Works of Wang Guowei]*, vol. 11, (eds.) Xie Weiyang 謝維揚 and Fang Xinliang 房鑫亮 (Hangzhou, 2009), p. 573.
[31] Matsui, 'Old Uigur toponyms', p. 276.
[32] Moriyasu, 'On the Uighur Buddhist society', pp. 153–77.
[33] *Ibid.*, p. 169.

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Before the Tang occupation, the city of Baile (白芳), located in the oasis of Pičan (modern Pičan County, Turfan Prefecture), was considered the eastern frontier of the kingdoms in the Turfan Basin; no settlements are recorded at that time further east in the oasis of Čiqtim. In manuscripts unearthed from Turfan dating to the period of the Sixteen Kingdoms (304–439), the expression 'guarding Baile' (Chin. shou Baile 守白芳) is often attested, reflecting its position on the frontier.[34] During the Qu Dynasty of Gaochang, the city was also referred to as Dong zhen cheng 東鎮城, 'the garrison city in the east'.[35] According to the biography of Xuanzang 玄奘, after a six-day journey through the desert, the famous monk made his first stop within the territory of Gaochang at Baile city, which was described as being located 'on the frontier of Gaochang'.[36]

After the Tang expansion into the Western Regions, a military outpost was set up to take advantage of the oasis of Čiqtim (located to the east of Pičan oasis). The earliest attestation of Chiting is found in the Chinese manuscript 67TAM78: 38, unearthed from the tombs in Astana, Turfan, which contains an administrative order issued from Puchang 蒲昌 County (modern Pičan = Baile under the Qu Dynasty of Gaochang) to the beacon tower at Chiting (Chin. Chiting *feng* 赤亭烽) for the delivery of provisions to the ten or so soldiers in the small garrison at Chiting (Chin. Chiting *zhen* 赤亭鎮).[37] Judging from the dates on other manuscripts unearthed from the same tomb, this can be dated to several years after 640,[38] the year in which the Tang captured Gaochang. The troops guarding Chiting numbered only ten or so at the time; their provisions would have been supplied from the adjacent oasis of Pičan, the previous frontier of the Turfan Basin. Other manuscripts reveal that postal stations for travellers (Chin. *Guan* 館) and for relay horses (Chin. *fang* 坊) were also set up there at around the same time.[39]

Another document, reconstructed from several fragments unearthed from Astana, is a report from the small garrison of Chiting on two accidental deaths of long-distance relay horses in 705.[40] The meat of the dead horses in both cases was discarded in the wild, since there was 'no one to sell to in the desert'.[41] Although one of the incidents happened 35 *li* east of the garrison site, the other happened within the military colony (Chin. *ying nei* 營內 'in the camp', *l.* 5), suggesting that the area of the oasis at that time was quite limited and there was no civilian settlement nearby, only desert.

By approximately the early 720s, the number of garrison soldiers in Chiting had reached 42, as revealed in manuscript 72TAM226: 51, unearthed in Astana.[42] This

[34] Huang Lie 黃烈, *Zhongguo gudai minzushi yanjiu* 中國古代民族史研究 *[Study on History of Non-Han Chinese Peoples in Pre-Modern China]* (Beijing, 1987), chapter 5, pp. 431–58.

[35] Wang Su, *Gaochang shigao*, p. 66.

[36] Huili 慧立 and Yancong 彥悰, *Da Ci'ensi sanzang fashi zhuan* 大慈恩寺三藏法師傳 *[A Biography of the Tripiṭaka Master of the Great Ci'en Monastery]*, (eds. and comms.) Sun Yutang 孫毓棠 and Xie Fang 謝方 (Beijing, 2000), 1, p. 18.

[37] Tang Zhangru 唐長孺 (ed.), *Tulufan chutu wenshu* 吐魯番出土文書 *[Texts Unearthed from Turfan]*, vol. II (Beijing, 1994), p. 56.

[38] Cheng Xilin 程喜霖, 'Lun Tangdai Xizhou zhenshu 論唐代西州鎮戍 [On the garrisons in Xizhou (Turfan) of the Tang time]', *Xiyu yanjiu* 西域研究, 2 (2013), p. 12.

[39] Chen Guocan 陳國燦, 'Tang xihzou puchangfu fangqu de zhenshu yu guanyi 唐西州蒲昌府防區的鎮戍與館驛 [Garrisons and relay posts within the military zone of Puchang Fu, Xizhou during the Tang period]', *Wei jin nanbeichao sui tang shi ziliao* 魏晉南北朝隋唐史資料 *[Historical Materials on the Wei, Jin, Northern and Southern Dynasties, Sui and Tang]*, 17 (2000), p. 95.

[40] For the joining of the fragments and the reconstructed text, see Chen Guocan 陳國燦, *Sitanyin suohuo Tulufan wenshu yanjiu* 斯坦因所獲吐魯番文書研究 *[Studies on the Turfan Documents Obtained by Stein]*, revised version (Wuhan, 1997), pp. 261–63.

[41] *Ibid*., p. 262.

[42] Tang Zhangru 唐長孺 (ed.), *Tulufan chutu wenshu* 吐魯番出土文書 *[Texts Unearthed from Turfan]*, vol. IV (Beijing, 1996), p. 101; cf. Ma Fu, 'Buddhist and Christian relay posts on the Silk Road (9th–12th cc.)', *Central Asiatic Journal*, 63.1+2 (2020), p. 242.

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manuscript also indicates that they had to cultivate a certain area of land to sustain themselves.[43] During the time of Tang colonisation, the area of the oasis was enlarged and thus it was able to support a larger population. The 'Treatise on Geography' in the *Xin Tangshu* refers to Chiting as a *shouzhuo* (i.e. a medium-sized garrison),[44] suggesting a growth in size of the garrison during the Tang period. Replacing the oasis of Pičan, the oasis of Čiqtim became the eastern gateway to Xizhou, namely the Turfan Basin.[45]

The first attestation of a civilian settlement in the oasis of Čiqtim is the record of a temple from 982, when the Song envoy Wang Yande 王延德 entered the territory of Qočo and was received by Uighur officials.[46] As Moriyasu has already pointed out, the settlement located at the former Tang garrison of Chiting was referred to as a city or town (Uig. *balïq*) in Uighur manuscripts.[47] Although he has assumed that this urban settlement was much smaller than the major cities,[48] various sources actually indicate that the oasis was significantly developed. An Old Uighur provision order dating to the Mongol era lists Čïqtïn and the adjacent major city Pučang (< Chin. Puchang of the Tang time; > modern Pičan) as places to be taxed,[49] suggesting that the city of Čïqtïn was almost as important as Pučang, which had been among the five counties in the Turfan Basin during Tang times, when it functioned as the superior administrative unit over Chiting garrison. The development of the oasis of Čiqtim during the Uighur era can be further exemplified by the rise of another city in Mongol times, namely Töküz, which was depicted on the recently published *Menggu shanshui ditu* 蒙古山水地圖 (*Landscape Map of the Mongols*[50]) and transcribed in Chinese as *Tuogusi* 脫谷思 (see below). The oasis of Čiqtim, initially settled by Tang soldiers as a military colony, was thus a prosperous area with two cities within it by Mongol times.

### *From Dushan garrison to Dushan city*

During the Tang era, the eastern gateway to Beiting was Dushan 獨山 ('(at) the lone mountain') garrison, in a relationship that was similar to that of Chiting to Xizhou. The 'Treatise on Geography' in the *Xin Tangshu* outlines the official route from Yizhou to Beiting, marking the following two stops: Dushan garrison and Pulei County.[51] It is now well accepted that the site of Dushan garrison is the ruined city of Youku (Chin. Youku gucheng 油庫古城) in modern Mulei 木壘 (Mulei County, Changji Prefecture),

[43] *Ibid.*

[44] *Xin Tangshu*, 40, p. 1046.

[45] Fu, 'Buddhist and Christian relay posts', p. 242.

[46] *Songshi* 宋史 *[History of the Song]* (Beijing, 1977), 490, p. 14111; cf. Fu, 'Buddhist and Christian relay posts', pp. 241–42.

[47] Moriyasu, 'On the Uighur Buddhist society', pp. 156, 169.

[48] *Ibid.*, p. 170.

[49] One of the two provision orders preserved in the manuscript SI 4820 housed in St. Petersburg. For the latest edition of the text, see M. Vér, *Old Uyghur Documents Concerning the Postal System of the Mongol Empire* (Turnhout, 2019), PO19, pp. 92–93.

[50] In the style of traditional Chinese landscape painting, this map depicts cities, mountains, waters, and other landmarks along the overland route from Jiayu guan 嘉峪關 all the way to Arabia and the eastern Mediterranean. The geographic knowledge reflected on the map can be dated to Ming China; see Lin Meicun 林梅村 (ed. and comm.), *Menggu shanshui ditu: zai Riben xin faxian de yifu shiliu shiji Sichou zhilu ditu* 蒙古山水地圖: 在日本新發現的一幅十六世紀絲綢之路地圖 *[Mongolian Landscape Map: A Sixteenth Century Silk Road Map Recently Discovered in Japan]* (Beijing, 2011), p. 2; N. Kenzheakhmet, *Eurasian Historical Geography. As Reflected in Geographical Literature and in Maps from the 13th to the Mid-17th Centuries* (Gossenberg, 2021), pp. 112–22.

[51] *Xin Tangshu*, 40, p. 1046.

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which lies *circa* 90 kilometres away from the site of Beiting.[52] The most recent official survey dates the founding of the city to Tang times,[53] though no archaeological excavations have yet been carried out.

The name of Dushan is attested in several different forms in later sources. According to his itinerary, after visiting the Mongol ruler Möngke Khan at Karakorum, Het'um I, the king of Little Armenia (the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia), travelled by a place named *Berbalex*, located before Bešbalïq on his itinerary.[54] James Russel Hamilton has associated this toponym with Mulei.[55] Dai Liangzuo 戴良佐 has proposed a Turkic etymon *bir-balïq ('lone city') and has correctly identified it with the toponym Bai balie 白拔烈 in the *Liaoshi*,[56] another transcription for the same etymon. Moreover, he has identified both the Dushan garrison of the Tang and the Dushan city of Mongol times as the Chinese name for the city of *bir-balïq.[57] It is now generally accepted that the Dushan garrison of Tang times continued to exist down to the Mongol era.[58] By the thirteenth century, however, the city must have evolved from a garrison site to an urban settlement. As the *Yuanshi* records, when Chinggis Khan travelled past the city site during his campaign to the west, he was informed that the 'civilians' (Chin. min 民) of the city had migrated to other places due to a famine that had occurred years earlier.[59]

### *From Pingluo garrison to *Barlïγ city*

Pingluo 憑洛 (or 馮洛)—a medium-sized garrison of the Tang located to the west of Beiting—was also transformed into a city after the Uighur occupation. According to Paul Pelliot, the earliest attestation of this site from the Uighur era is perhaps the *bihä: rakä* (*l.* 21) in the list of cities preserved in the so-called Staël-Holstein scroll, dated to 925,[60] although his identification is not generally accepted.[61] The 12th chapter of the Persian source *Hudūd al-Ālam* (compiled in 982/83) describes the geography of the *Toghuzghuz* (commonly understood as the West Uighurs).[62] The toponym *bārlugh* is listed among the five villages behind the Bogda mountain, including the winter capital Bešbalïq (*Panjkath* in the text).[63] The form can probably be traced back to a Turkic etymon *Barlïγ (< *Barslïγ, '(place) with tigers'), which could either be the older place name before the Tang occupation (later transcribed in Chin. as Pingluo) or an Old Uighur adjustment of the transcription of Chinese Pingluo due to folk etymology. In the latter case, Pingluo,

[52] Dai Liangzuo 戴良佐, 'Dushan cheng guzhi takan ji 獨山城故址踏勘記 [Survey of the site of Dushan city]', *Yuanshi ji beifang minzushi yanjiu jikan* 元史及北方民族史研究集刊, 8 (1984), pp. 107–8; Liu Yingsheng 劉迎勝, *Chahetai hanguo shi yanjiu* 察合台汗國史研究 *[Study on the History of the Chagatay Khanate]* (Shanghai, 2006), p. 591.

[53] Xinjiang Weiwuer zizhiqu wenwu ju (ed.), *Xinjiang gucheng yizhi*, pp. 404–5.

[54] J. A. Boyle (trans. and comm.), 'The journey of Het'um I, king of Little Armenia, to the court of the Great Khan Möngke', *Central Asiatic Journal*, 9.3 (1964), p. 181.

[55] However, he wrongly identified it with the Tang-era Pulei County; see J. R. Hamilton, 'Autour du manuscrit Staël-Holstein', *T'oung Pao*, Second Series, 46.1+2 (1958), pp. 146–47.

[56] *Liaoshi* 遼史 *[History of the Liao]* (Beijing, 2016), 94, pp. 1519–20.

[57] Dai Liangzuo, 'Dushan cheng guzhi takan ji', p. 107.

[58] Hua Tao, *Xiyu lishi yanjiu*, p. 87. However, he did not realise that the Dushan garrison of the Tang should be included in this group, but followed Hamilton in mistakenly identifying it with Pulei County; Liu Yingsheng, *Chahetai hanguo shi yanjiu*, pp. 590–91.

[59] *Yuanshi* 元史 *[History of the Yuan]* (Beijing, 1976), 124, p. 3047.

[60] P. Pelliot, 'Book review: G. L. M. Clauson, 'The Geographical Names in the Staël-Holstein Scroll' (*JRAS*, 1931. 297–309)', *T'oung Pao*, Second Series, 28.1+2 (1931), p. 140. For the dating of the text to 925, see E. G. Pulleyblank, 'The date of the Staël-Holstein roll', *Asia Major* 4.1 (1954), pp. 90–97.

[61] Hamilton, 'Autour du manuscrit Staël-Holstein', p. 149.

[62] V. Minorsky (ed., trans., and comm.), *Hudūd al-Ālam: The Regions of the World* (London, 1970), p. 265.

[63] *Ibid.*, p. 94.

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pronounced as /pɦiəŋ lak/ in Late Middle Chinese,[64] might possibly have been pronounced as /pɦi lak/ in the north-western dialect after the 10th century;[65] it could thus be equated with *bārlugh* or its etymon *Barlïγ. Given its location and proximity to Bešbalïq, *bārlugh* can be identified with Pingluo from Tang times. Since the capital city Bešbalïq was also referred to as a 'village' in *Hudūd al-Ālam*, *bārlugh* was likely an urban settlement, just like Bešbalïq.

More evidence for the existence of an urban settlement can be found in *Tarīkh-i Jahān-gushā* (*History of the World-Conqueror*), the historical account of the Mongol empire composed by the Persian author Juvayni in the 1360s. In the chapter on Körgüz (a Uighur official in eastern Persia under the Mongols), Juvayni writes: 'His birthplace was a small village four parasangs from Bešbalïq called *Barligh* in the western part of the Uighur country on the route followed by travellers through that region.'[66] The Persian unit *parasang* indicates the distance that travellers could travel in one hour; its exact value varied at different times. Considering data from different sources,[67] the distance from Bešbalïq to Barligh can be estimated to be 18–25 kilometres. As mentioned above, the distance from Beiting to Pingluo recorded in the *Xin Tangshu* is more than 60 *li*, namely 26.5 kilometres, roughly matching the distance from Bešbalïq to Barligh.

### *From Juliu garrison to Kunlü city*

Juliu 俱六—another medium-sized garrison on the route between Beiting and Luntai during the Tang era—can also be located as an urban settlement during the Uighur times. Hamilton has identified *K'ullug* on the itinerary of Het'um I as the same toponym, proposing a Turkic etymon *köllüg.[68] On the historical world map *Kangnido*[69] (compiled in 1402), one finds the toponym Yinliu 因六 along the route from Bešbalïq to Emil—the route that followed the northern slopes of the Tianshan. Chen Dezhi has correctly pointed out that the Chinese written form is a mistake for 固六 (Gu liu), therefore identifying the toponym with *K'ullug* and *Juliu*.[70]

[64] The Late Middle Chinese and Early Mandarin (EM) pronunciations of Chinese characters in this article are all based on E. G. Pulleyblank's reconstruction (*Lexicon of Reconstructed Pronunciation in Early Middle Chinese, Late Middle Chinese, and Early Mandarin* (Vancouver, 1991)).

[65] Although the loss of final /ŋ/ in the north-western dialect was limited to words with spread vowels in the late-Tang period, it began to spread to words with rounded and neutral vowels from the period of the Five Dynasties, i.e. the tenth century onwards; see Luo Changpei 羅常培, *Tang Wudai xibei fangyin* 唐五代西北方音 *[North-Western Dialect in the Tang and the Five Dynasties]* (Beijing, 2018), p. 190.

[66] J. A. Boyle (trans.), *The History of the World-Conqueror*, vol. 2 (Cambridge, MA, 1958), p. 489.

[67] For example, Bivar has estimated a range of 4.48 to 5.35 kilometres based on pre-Islamic sources; see A. D. H. Bivar, 'Weights and measures in pre-Islamic period', *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, online edn (2010), http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/weights-measures-i (accessed 17 November 2023). The *Persian-English Dictionary* gives an estimate of 1 league, i.e. 5.49 kilometres; see F. J. Steingass, *A Comprehensive Persian-English Dictionary, including the Arabic Words and Phrases to Be Met with in Persian Literature* (London, 1892), p. 918.

[68] Hamilton, 'Autour du manuscrit Staël-Holstein', p. 145; Boyle (trans. and comm.), 'Journey of Het'um I', p. 182.

[69] Short for *Honil kangni yoktae kukto chi to* 混一疆理歷代國都之圖 *[Comprehensive Map of Integrated Lands and Regions of Historical Countries and Their Capitals]*, compiled in Korea in 1402, see Kenzheakhmet, *Eurasian Historical Geography*, pp. 1–4.

[70] Chen Dezhi 陳得芝 '"Hunyi jiangli lidai guodu zhi tu" xiyu diming shidu 混一疆理歷代國都之圖西域地名釋讀 [Studies on the toponyms in the West Region on the "Comprehensive map of integrated lands and regions of historical countries and their capitals"]', in *'Da Ming hunyi tu' yu 'Hunyi jiangli tu' yanjiu* 大明混一圖與混一疆理圖研究 *[Studies on the 'Comprehensive Map of Integrated Lands of the Great Ming' and the 'Comprehensive Map of Integrated Lands and Regions of Historical Countries and Their Capitals']*, (ed.) Liu Yingsheng (Nanjing, 2010), pp. 3–4. The character yin 因 might also be a mistake for kun 困, in EM /k$^{h}$un/, fitting the first syllable of *köllüg as well. Kenzheakhmet also related it to *K'ullug* and *Juliu*, but he ignored Chen's study and explanation; see Kenzheakhmet, *Eurasian Historical Geography*, pp. 76–77.

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I would like to add here another form of the same name, dating to the early thirteenth century. The biography of an Uighur elite, Xiban 昔班, in the *Yuanshi* records that his father, Que li bie wo chi 闊里別斡赤, when being awarded for his service during the campaign to the west with Chinggis Khan, requested to be made the *darugači* (governor) of the city of *Kunlü* 坤閭 in his own country, namely the West Uighur Kingdom.[71] *Kunlü* has previously been accepted by several scholars as a transcription of the modern toponym Korla (Korla city, Bayingol Prefecture, Xinjiang).[72] However, the fact that Korla is not attested in any other sources before the Qing era makes this identification very unlikely. Furthermore, the EM pronouciation of Kunlü can be reconstructed as /k$^{h}$un ly/ with rounded vowels in both syllables, contradicting the unrounded vowel in the second syllable of Korla. Kunlü can thus be identified with *köllüg. Since the Turkic denominal nominal suffix +lXg/lXγ was usually transcribed in Chinese with a loss of the final g/γ in Mongol times,[73] there is no significant difficulty in identifying the Chinese transcription Kunlü with *köllüg. Thus, the medium-sized garrison of Juliu in Tang times had developed into an urban settlement of Kunlü by the time of Chinggis Khan.

### *Urbanisation along the northern slopes of the Tianshan during the Uighur era*

The defence system in the Beiting protectorate during the seventh and eighth centuries covered the routes that led to Beiting from Barsköl and Hami in the east, from the eastern rim of Dzungaria in the north, and from the Ili valley in the west, where the majority of the population were nomadic Turkic tribes subject to the Tang.[74] Only the three cities (counties) of Beiting, Luntai, and Pulei had sedentary civilian populations in addition to the standing armies. With the influx of Uighurs into the region, a significant process of urbanisation took place along the northern slopes of the Tianshan (see Table 1). Mahmud Kashgari's description of the West Uighur Kingdom in the 1170s reveals the surprising outcome of this process. The entry 'Uighur' in the *Dīwān Luγāt at-Turk* (*Compendium of the Turkic Dialects*) lists five major cities in the kingdom: Solmï, Qočo, Čambalïq, Bešbalïq, and Yangï Balïq.[75] For the first time, the eastern Tianshan region witnessed the major cities on the northern slopes (which had been dominated by nomads even during the Tang era) outnumbering the major cities in the oases along the southern slopes. Unlike Bešbalïq—a major city already established before the Tang era—both Čambalïq and Yangï Balïq were very likely established during the West Uighur Kingdom on the foundation of former Tang garrison city sites. It is generally accepted that

[71] *Yuanshi*, 134, p. 3246.

[72] Initiated by Tu Ji in his note to Xiban's Biography; see Tu Ji 屠寄, *Mengwuer shi ji* 蒙兀兒史記 *[Historical Records of the Mongols]* (Shanghai, 1989), p. 357. This idea was accepted by the editors of the *Zhongguo lishi dituji* 中國歷史地圖集 *[Historical Atlas of China]*; see Tan Qixiang 譚其驤 (ed. in chief), *Zhongguo lishi ditu ji* (Beijing, 1982), vol. 7, p. 22; see also Deng Ruiling 鄧銳齡, *Zhongguo lishi ditu ji nan Song Yuan shiqi xibei bianjiang tufu dili kaoshi* 中國歷史地圖集南宋、元時期西北邊疆圖幅地理考釋 *[Studies on the Geography on the Portions of the* Historical Atlas of China *that Relate to the North-Western Frontiers of the Southern Song and the Yuan]* (Beijing, 2016), p. 28; Liu Yingsheng, *Chahetai hanguo shi yanjiu*, p. 591.

[73] Some famous cases in Yuan-era Chinese sources can prove this theory. The Turkic word *külüg* used in the khagan title of Qayšan was transcribed as Qulü 曲律 with lü (EM ly) as the transcription of *–lüg*. The Naiman prince Küčlüg was transcribed as Quchulü 屈出律 in Chinese, where lü (EM ly) is also used to transcribe *-lüg*. The Turkic ethnonym Qarluq was written as Halalu 哈剌魯 in Chinese sources of the Yuan era, with lu (EM lɔ) as the transcription of *-luq*.

[74] These tribes were organised and settled as vassals in the form of *zhous* and *fus*; see *Xin Tangshu*, 43, pp. 1130–32.

[75] R. Dankoff (ed. and trans.), *Compendium of the Turkic Dialects*, Part I (Cambridge, MA, 1982), pp. 139–40.

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**Table 1.** The Tang legacy on the northern slopes of the Tianshan in Uighur times

| | In the Tang era | | In the Uighur era | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Name | Status | Name | Status | Site name and location | Size (area)[76] |
| 1 | Beiting | Seat of the protectorate, county | Bešbalïq | Major city, summer capital | Beiting<br>Jimsar County, Changji Prefecture | *Circa* 1,555,000 $m^2$ |
| 2 | Luntai | County | Luntai | City | Wulabo 烏拉泊<br>Ürümči city | *Circa* 259,200 $m^2$ |
| 3 | Pulei | County | Not attested | City[77] | Tangchao dun 唐朝墩<br>Qitai County, Changji Prefecture | 154,350 $m^2$ |
| 4 | Dushan | Garrison (medium) | *Birbalïq, Bai balie, Dushan, Berbalex | City | Youku 油庫<br>Mulei County, Changji Prefecture | 28,7700 $m^2$ [78] |
| 5 | Shabo | Garrison (medium) | Śaparä[79] | City | Shabo<br>Jimsar County, Changji Prefecture | 9,785 $m^2$ |
| 6 | Pingluo | Garrison (medium) | *Barlïγ, Bārlugh, Barligh | City | Pingluo<br>Jimsar County, Changji Prefecture | 33,629 $m^2$ |

(*Continued*)

[76] The data of the sites are based on the third round of national surveys on historical relics in China (2007–09), on which see Xinjiang Weiwuer zizhiqu wenwu ju (ed.), *Xinjiang gucheng yizhi*.

[77] Despite the absence of records in any written sources, recent archaeological excavations have proven that the city site was used by the West Uighurs; see Zhongguo renmin daxue beifang minzu kaogu yanjiu suo 中國人民大學北方民族考古研究所 et al., 'Xinjiang Qitai xian Tangchao dun chengzhi 2018~2019 nian fajue jianbao 新疆奇台縣唐朝墩城址 2018~2019 年發掘簡報 [Brief Report on 2018~2019 Excavation of Tangchao dun City Site in Qitai County, Xinjang]', *Kaogu* 考古 (2020), 5, pp. 54–63.

[78] Xinjiang Weiwuer zizhiqu wenwu ju mistakenly records the data as 28,770 $m^2$ (*Xinjiang gucheng yizhi*, p. 404).

[79] Attested in the Staël-Holstein scroll of 925; see H. W. Bailey, 'The Staël-Holstein miscellany', *Asia Major* 2 (1951), pp. 3, 14; cf. Hamilton, 'Autour du manuscrit Staël-Holstein', p. 149.

**Table 1.** (*Continued.*)

| | In the Tang era | | In the Uighur era | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Name | Status | Name | Status | Site name and location | Size (area)[76] |
| 7 | Yele | Garrison (medium) | *Yarlïγ, Yarhleγ[80] | City (?) | Zi ni quan 滋泥泉 (or Bei zhuangzi 北莊子) Fukang County, Changji Prefecture | *Circa* 46,200 $m^2$ |
| 8 | Juliu | Garrison (medium) | *Köllüg, K'ullug, Kunliu, Kunlü | City | Liuyun 六運 Fukang County, Changji Prefecture | *Circa* 120,000 $m^2$ |
| 9 | Zhangbao | Garrison (medium) | Čambalïq, Janbaliq, Zhang bali 彰八里 | Major city | Changji Changji city | *Circa* 660,000 $m^2$ |
| 10 | Wuzai | Garrison (medium) | Qutaba, Gutaba, Xut'ap'ay, | Major city | Not identified Qutubi County, Changji Prefecture | No data |
| 11 | Qingzhen | Garrison (large) | Yangï Balïq, Yangji bali | Major city | Lounan 樓南 Manas County, Changji Prefecture | *Circa* 322,400 $m^2$ |

[80] Attested as Arleγ or Yarhleγ on Het'um I's itinerary; see Hamilton, 'Autour du manuscrit Staël-Holstein', pp. 146–47; Boyle (trans. and comm.), 'Journey of Het'um I', p. 182.

Čambalïq evolved from the medium-sized garrison of Zhangbao[81] and Yangï Balïq from the large garrison of Qingzhen.[82]

Apart from these three cities, the city of Qutaba likely also rose as a major city on the northern slopes of the Tianshan after Kashgari's time; its name is still retained to the present day as Qutubi (> Chin. Hutubi 呼圖壁; modern Hutubi County, Changji Prefecture). It was listed in the official records of the Yuan, along with the aforementioned three cities, as one of the four major cities on the northern slopes of the Tianshan in the realm of the Uighurs (Chin. Weiwuer di 畏兀兒地, = Persian Uighuristan).[83] Old Uighur manuscript U5265, unearthed in Turfan, is a private loan contract for a donkey to be used on a two-way journey to Qutaba[84] in which the city is mentioned as a destination for Uighur merchants. In the early thirteenth century, as recorded in Qiu Chuji's travel account, the region west of Čambalïq was populated mainly by Muslims[85] and Qutaba was the first stop on the way from Čambalïq to the west. The rise of Qutaba possibly resulted from its location as a gateway of exchange between the Buddhist Uighurs and the Muslims. As Hamilton has pointed out, the medium-sized garrison of Wuzai from Tang times should be located in Qutaba (modern Qutubi),[86] but the name Wuzai seems to have no connection with Qutaba/Qutubi, which is very likely derived from Arabic *Qutbah*. This, along with a lack of archaeological data from the oasis of Qutubi, makes it unclear whether the city was established on the foundation of the Tang-era garrison or as a new settlement. Nonetheless, the emergance of Qutaba is a good example of urbanisation on the northern slopes of the Tianshan after the twelfth century.

## The growth of cities in the Turfan Basin

Unlike the northern slopes of the Tianshan, the oases along the southern slopes (i.e. the northern rim of the Tarim Basin) had a long history of sedentary culture in an urban setting. As mentioned above, major cities in this region, especially in the Turfan Basin, continued to enjoy prosperity after the Uighurs arrived. Rather than just adapting to urban life, the Uighurs actually promoted urbanisation in the region. According to the Yuan-era *Tongzhi tiaoge* 通制條格, there were at least 24 Uighur cities in the Turfan Basin by the year 1321,[87] thus outnumbering the 22 cities they had taken over from the Tang. This section will identify new cities that emerged in the Turfan Basin during the Uighur era, demonstrating the Uighur contribution to urbanisation beyond the legacy of the Tang.

### *The emergence of Töküz (Tuogusi) city*

The Tang-era establishment of the military colony of Chiting in the present-day oasis of Čiqtim and its subsequent transformation into an urban settlement under the Uighurs has

[81] Wang Guowei (ed. and comm.), *Changchun zhenren xiyouji zhu*, p. 573; Hamilton, 'Autour du manuscrit Staël-Holstein', p. 147; Liu Yingsheng, *Chahetai hanguo shi yanjiu*, pp. 588–89.

[82] Hamilton, 'Autour du manuscrit Staël-Holstein', p. 148; Liu Yingsheng, *Chahetai hanguo shi yanjiu*, pp. 589–90.

[83] Transcribed in Chinese as Gutaba 古塔巴 on the map in *Jingshi dadian* 經世大典 *[Compendium for Administering the Empire]* (*circa* 1330); see Zhou Shaochuan 周少川 et al. (eds.), *Jingshi dadian jijiao* 經世大典輯校 *[Edition of the 'Compendium of Administering the Empire']* (Beijing, 2020), p. 10. See also the 'Treatise on Geography' in the *Yuanshi*, 63, pp. 1567–70. The same toponym is also attested as *Xut'ap'ay* on Het'um I's itinerary (Hamilton, 'Autour du manuscrit Staël-Holstein', p. 148; Boyle (trans. and comm.), 'Journey of Het'um I', p. 182) and in various forms of Chinese transcription in the sources after the fourteenth century; see Kenzheakhmet, *Eurasian Historical Geography*, pp. 162, 271.

[84] N. Yamada 山田信夫, *Sammlung uigurischer Kontrakte*, (eds.) J. Oda et al. (Osaka, 1993), II, RH13, pp. 81–82.

[85] Wang Guowei (ed. and comm.), *Changchun zhenren xiyouji zhu*, p. 575.

[86] Hamilton, 'Autour du manuscrit Staël-Holstein', p. 148.

[87] Fang Linggui 方齡貴, *Tongzhi tiaoge jiaozhu* 通制條格校註 *[Edition and Commentary of* The Comprehensive Regulations and Statutes*]* (Beijing, 2001), 4, p. 202; cf. Fu Ma, *Sichou zhilu shang de Xizhou Huihu wangchao*, p. 199.

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been discussed above. By the Mongol era, another city had emerged in the same oasis, reflecting further development in the area. In the eastern part of the Turfan region, the *Menggu shanshui ditu* depicts a square city with the name Tuogusi 脫谷思, not attested in any other Chinese sources.[88] Lin Meicun has proposed the Turkic etymon *toquz, simply based on the similarity in pronunciation.[89] Depicted on the map to the lower left of Bizhan 比站 (Uig. Pičan), its actual location should be to the north-east, as can be proven by the location of Lanzhen 懶真 (Uig. Lämčin) relative to Lucheng 魯城 (Uig. Lükčüng) on the same part of the map; it too is depicted to the lower left, although it actually lies to the north-east. One can therefore situate the city of Tuogusi in the oasis of Čiqtim—the only oasis located to the north-east of Pičan. Kenzheakhmet has identified it with a modern toponym Tekusi 特庫斯 located along the route from Čiqtim to Pičan,[90] which fits Tuogusi in both pronunciation and location.

This settlement can also be identified in two sources from Yuan times, thus dating its emergence to the second half of the thirteenth century. An Old Uighur loan contract obtained by the German Turfan expedition bears a toponym Töküz, which matches Tuogusi (EM. $t^{h}ɔ$ ku sz) not only in pronunciation, but also in location. Its original shelf mark *T II 3 Čiqtim 3 indicates that the excavation site was the ruined city of Čiqtim. The contract records the rental of 'a piece of land for the cultivation of crops in Töküz' (*l.* 3, *töküztäki tarïγ tarïmaqča yer*) for 'twelve *liang* paper money' (*l.* 4, *on iki stïr čo*),[91] suggesting that Töküz was very likely located not far from Čïqtïn city—that is, within the oasis of Čiqtim. The reference to the paper money *čo* (< Chin. chao 钞) narrows the date of the contract to a period between 1260, when Kublai Khan initially issued paper money, and 1304/05, when Uighuristan was incorporated into the Chagatay Khanate.[92]

In the sixth month of the fourth year of *Zhiyuan* 至元 (1267), Yelü Xiliang 耶律希亮 returned to Yuan territory from Kuča via the oases of Turfan and Hami, as is well known from his biography in the *Yuanshi.*[93] However, the text on his *shendao bei* 神道碑 ('the stele erected on the path to his tomb'), identified as the basis for his biography,[94] contains a more detailed itinerary, including two stops between Turfan and Hami at Liuzhong 柳中 (> Uig. Lükčüng~Lükčün) and *Jian hou zi* 鐵堠子,[95] neither of which is

[88] Lin Meicun (ed. and comm.), *Menggu shanshui ditu*, pp. 234–35.

[89] *Ibid.*, p. 134.

[90] The toponym is preserved in the late-Qing source *Xinmao shixing ji* 辛卯侍行記 (composed in 1897); see Kenzheakhmet, *Eurasian Historical Geography*, pp. 155–56. He has also proposed identifications with another toponym Tegusi 特古斯 from Qing times and a modern toponym Tügüz to the north-east of Lükčün; however, the latter, located to the west of Pičan, evidently does not fit the location of Tuogusi and Tekusi.

[91] Yamada, *Sammlung uigurischer Kontrakte*, II, RH03, p. 71; modified after M. Shōgaito 庄垣内正弘 'Book review: N. Yamada (J. Oda, P. Zieme, T. Umemura, and T. Moriyasu, eds.), *Sammlung uighurischer Kontrakte* (Osaka, 1993)', *Tōyōshi kenkyū* 東洋史研究, 53.2 (1994), p. 144. For the facsimile, see Yamada, *Sammlung uigurischer Kontrakte*, III, pl. 58.

[92] T. Allsen, 'The Yüan Dynasty and the Uighurs of Turfan in the 13th century', *China among Equals: The Middle Kingdom and Its Neighbors (10th–14th Centuries)*, (ed.) M. Rossabi (Berkeley, 1983), pp. 258–59.

[93] *Yuanshi*, 180, p. 4161.

[94] Cen Zhongmian 岑仲勉, '"Yelü Xiliang shendao bei" zhi dili renshi 耶律希亮神道碑之地理人事 [Geography and events seen from the shendao bei of Yelü Xiliang]', *Zhongwai shidi kaozheng* 中外史地考證 *[Studies on Historical Geography of China and Abroad]*, Cen Zhongmian (Beijing, 1962), p. 547.

[95] Wei Su 危素, *Wei taipu wen xuji* 危太僕文續集 *[Sequel to the Prose Works of* Wei taipu*]*, 2, in *Yuanren wenji zhenben congkan* 元人文集珍本叢刊 *[Reprinted Rare Books on the Works of the Authors of the Yuan]*, vol. 7 (Taibei, 1985), p. 507. The text reads: 六月，繇苦先城至哈剌火州，宕柳中，經鐵堠子，宿伊州，涉大漠以還. 'In the sixth month (of the fourth year of Zhiyuan = 1267), he started from Kuča, arriving at Qara Qočo (for the first stop). (Continuing) past Liuzhong (modern Lükčün) and *Jian hou zi*, he stayed overnight in Hami, and crossed the desert to return (to the territory controlled by the Yuan).'

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included in his biography. Of particular interest is the toponym *Jian hou zi* midway between Lükčün and Hami, which has not been attested in any other sources. As Cen Zhongmian has correctly pointed out, *Jian hou zi* must have been located in the oasis of Pičan or the oasis of Čiqtim.[96] If we consider the character *jian* 鐵 'iron product' as a variant of *tie* 鐵 'iron', close in both meaning and orthography, this toponym can be identified with Töküz (> Tuogusi), located to the east of Pičan. **Tie hou zi* 鐵堠子, in EM. /t$^{h}$jɛ xəw tsɻ/, roughly fits the pronunciation of Töküz and Tuogusi (EM. t$^{h}$ɔ ku sz), except that the first vowel is not rounded. If this identification is valid, the rise of Töküz as a major settlement along the route between Turfan and Hami can be dated prior to the year 1267.

### *The emergence of Sirkip city*

There are no records of urban settlements along the route connecting the oases of Lükčün and Lämčin through the modern Sirkip Aγïz ('Sirkip valley') in any sources from the Tang era or before. The form *tsīrākyepä* retained in the Staël-Holstein scroll of 925 (*l.* 18) has been identified as the Khotanese transcription of Sirkip,[97] the earliest attestation of this toponym. The collocation with *kaṃtha* 'town' indicates that an urban settlement probably had emerged by 925, after the Uighur occupation of Turfan. The toponym has been attested in the form of *tsirkip*[98] and *sirkäp*[99] in Old Uighur manuscripts; according to Kitsudo Koichi, it can be traced to the name of a Buddhist temple Qiji si 七級寺 located at the very site in Tang times.[100]

The existence of a city in Sirkip can be further proven in the *Menggu shanshui ditu*. A square city with the name Xi er qi 洗兒乞 is depicted between Lucheng and Lanzhen, indicating an actual location between the oases of Lükčün and Lämčin.[101] Although Lin Meicun has proposed a Turkic etymon sarïčï,[102] Xi er qi, in EM /si ɻ k$^{h}$i/, should rather be understood as the Chinese transcription of Sirkip,[103] which fits both the location and the pronunciation.

### *The emergence of Yangxi city*

*Yangxi is another city that emerged during Uighur times midway between the oases of Lükčün and Qočo, where no urban settlement was recorded previously. In the *Menggu shanshui ditu*, it is recorded as Yanghei 羊黑 in Chinese and depicted as a square city.[104] A more accurate description is provided in the *Xiyu tudi renwu lüe* 西域土地人物略—an outline of lands and peoples of the Western Regions included in the provincial gazetteer for Shaanxi (Chin. *Shanxi tongzhi* 陝西通志) that was compiled in 1542. In it,

[96] Cen Zhongmian, 'Yelü Xiliang shendao bei', p. 574. However, he has further identified it as another form of the Chinese toponym Chiting, regarding *jian* as a transcription of the sound *chi*, and *hou zi*, literally 'beacon tower', as a synonym of *ting* (*ibid.*). His solution is very unlikely to be correct, since Chiting had already become a frozen toponym and been inherited by the Uighur people in phonetic transcription at the latest by the tenth century (Matsui, 'Old Uigur toponyms', p. 276).

[97] Bailey, 'Staël-Holstein miscellany', pp. 3, 13; cf. Hamilton, 'Autour du manuscrit Staël-Holstein', p. 140.

[98] D. Matsui, 'Two remarks on the Toyoq Caves and Abita Qur "Abita Cave"', *Письменные памятники Востока* 18.3 (2021), pp. 45–46.

[99] T. Moriyasu 森安孝夫, 'Uigurugo Bunken ウイグル語文献 [Uighur literature]', in *Tonkō Kogo Bunken* 敦煌胡語文献 *[Non-Chinese Literature from Dunhuang]*, (ed.) Z. Yamaguchi 山口瑞鳳 (Tokyo, 1980), pp. 82–83; Y. Kasai, *Die uigurischen buddhistischen Kolophone* (Turnhout, 2008), p. 211.

[100] K. Kitsudo, 'Etymon of Sirkip Oasis in the Turfan region', *Türk Dilleri Araştırmaları*, 24.1 (2014), pp. 145–50.

[101] Lin Meicun (ed. and comm.), *Menggu shanshui ditu*, pp. 234–35.

[102] *Ibid.*, p. 134.

[103] Fu Ma, *Sichou zhilu shang de Xizhou Huihu wangchao*, pp. 217–18; Kenzheakhmet, *Eurasian Historical Geography*, pp. 156–57.

[104] Lin Meicun (ed. and comm.), *Menggu shanshui ditu*, pp. 235–36.

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Yanghei is recorded as being located to the north of Lükčün and 50 *li* to the east of Qočo.[105] Although the name has not been attested in its Old Uighur form thus far, we can relate it to the modern toponym Yangxi (> Chin. Yanghai 洋海; Yangxi Village, Pičan County, Turfan Prefecture).

Thus, in addition to cities that were either inherited from the Tang or established on the foundation of Tang-era military settlements, several new cities emerged during the Uighur era. It is noteworthy that most of these cities were located not within the densely populated oases that had a long history of urban culture before the Uighurs arrived, but rather along the major routes between these old cities, suggesting an expansion of oases in the Turfan Basin and a process of urbanisation during the Uighur era.

## The Uighur tendency towards urbanisation

The general acceptance of the sedentary legacy of the Tang may well be attributed to the Uighur fondness for urban life that was already evident in the steppe period of their history, according to literary sources and recent archaeological data. Excavations of their steppe capital *Ordu Balïq* (Karabalgasun) confirm Tamīm ibn Baḥr's description of urban life there.[106] The site of *Bay Balïq*, built under the command of the second Uighur khagan,[107] has been identified as a complex of three cities according to archaeological surveys.[108] In addition to Uighur cities still in use during the subsequent Liao Dynasty,[109] the famous Mongol city of Karakorum may, according to recent archaeological data, have been built upon a walled site dating back to Uighur times.[110] An increasing number of city sites with no record in literary sources have also been dated to the Uighur era.[111] The total number of cities built under the Uighurs may reach 40,[112] outnumbering any other nomadic steppe empire in premodern times.[113] What made the Uighurs so special

[105] For the critical edition of the Chinese text, see *ibid.*, p. 99. For the English translation, see Kenzheakhmet, *Eurasian Historical Geography*, p. 126.

[106] V. Minorsky (ed., trans., and comm.), 'Tamīm ibn Baḥr's journey to the Uyghurs', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 12.2 (1948), p. 283. For the most recent data revealed by the German–Mongolian joint excavation, see B. Dähne, *Karabalgasun – Stadt der Nomaden: Die archäologischen Ausgrabungen in der frühuigurischen Hauptstadt 2009–2011* (Wiesbaden, 2017), pp. 27–135.

[107] Recorded in the inscription of Šine usu; see T. Moriyasu 森安孝夫 et al., 'Shineusu hibun yakuchū シネウス碑文訳注 [Šine-Usu inscription from the Uyghur period in Mongolia: revised text, translation and commentaries]', *Nairiku ajia gengo no kenkyū* 内陸アジア言語の研究 *[Studies on the Inner Asian Languages]* 24 (2009), pp. 20, 31, 78.

[108] For the most recent survey of the site, see T. Moriyasu 森安孝夫 and A. Ochir (eds.), *Mongorukoku genzon iseki, hibun chōsa kenkyū hōkoku* モンゴル国現存遺蹟·碑文調査研究報告 *[Provisional Report of Researches on Historical Sites and Inscriptions in Mongolia from 1996 to 1998]* (Toyonaka, 1999), pp. 196–98.

[109] The 'Treatise on Geography' in the *Liaoshi* listed two garrison cities that were built on the site of former Uighur cities, both called the 'city for the Khatun' in Uighur times; see *Liaoshi*, 39, p. 507.

[110] E. Pohl, 'Interpretation without excavation—topographic mapping on the territory of the first Mongolian capital Karakorum', in *Current Archaeological Research in Mongolia: Papers from the First International Conference on 'Archaeological Research in Mongolia' Held in Ulaanbaatar, August 19th–23rd, 2007*, (eds.) J. Bemmann et al. (Bonn, 2009), pp. 526–31.

[111] For example, the city of Por Bajin has been carbon dated to 777; see Margot Kuitems et al., 'Radiocarbon-based approach capable of subannual precision resolves the origins of the site of Por-Bajin', *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 117.25 (2020), pp. 14038–41.

[112] For a thorough survey, see Song Guodong 宋國棟, 'Huihe chengzhi yanjiu 回紇城址研究 [Research on the City Sites of the Uighur Khaganate]' (unpublished PhD dissertation, Shanxi University, 2018), pp. 23 et seq.

[113] For a chronological survey of the sedentary sites of nomadic peoples on Mongolian steppe, see Kh. Perlee, 'K istorii drevnich gorodov i poselenii Mongolii [On the history of ancient cities and settlements of Mongolia]', *Sovetskaja Archeologija*, 3 (1957), pp. 43–53; Kh. Perlee, *Mongol Ard Ulsyn ért dundad üeijn chot suuriny tovčoon [A Brief History of Ancient and Medieval Period Settlements in the Mongolian People's Republic]* (Ulaanbaatar, 1961); Dähne,

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in this regard compared with their nomadic forerunners on the steppe? One may naturally relate it to their deep involvement, under Sogdian influence, in trade along the Silk Road—in particular the famous 'horse and silk trade' with Tang China after the Uighurs helped to pacify the An Lushan Rebellion.[114] As the Uighur ruling class continuously obtained large volumes of silk and other high-value objects from the Tang, they perhaps naturally felt the need to build walled palaces and cities to demonstrate their status and to house their property. Similar opinion has been suggested as early as in the Chinese chronicle *Zizhi tongjian*: 'As (Bögü Khagan) was meritorious to the Tang, they rewarded him amply. Thereafter, Dengli Khagan (i.e., Bögü Khagan) began to be arrogant, and built palaces to reside.'[115] However, this alone seems insufficient to explain the unique fondness of the Uighurs for urban life—a fondness that differentiates them from their forerunners who likewise benefitted from the Silk Road trade.[116] We must take into consideration a striking characteristic of the Uighur Khaganate, namely that a very large sedentary population formed in the core of their steppe territory.

In addition to his description of the sedentary life in and around the Uighur capital city, the Abbasid envoy Tamīm ibn Baḥr also revealed that villages and cultivated lands (i.e. a considerable sedentary population) could be found within 20 days' journey of the capital.[117] Whereas Zoroastrians coexisted outside the city, Manichaeans prevailed in and around it, according to his report. During the reign of Bögü Khagan (759–70), the Uighurs converted to Manichaeism under the influence of the Sogdians, becoming the first and only nomadic group in history to embrace this ideology as their state religion. After Bögü Khagan's conversion by the four Manichaean monks whom he brought from Luoyang, a *Mahistag*, who ranked as the third class in the hierarchy of the eastern branch of the Manichaean Church, led monks and nuns into the country and propagated the Manichaean teaching there,[118] resulting in the establishment of a Manichaean monastic order in the central steppe. A recently published Old Uighur manuscript reveals that Bögü Khagan even invited three *Možak*s (Manichaean apostles), along with 60 senior priests, to the 'realm of the Orkhun' (*el orxun*, i.e. the centre of the steppe); they brought with them 200 scripture books (*nom*) to preach.[119] As an increasing number of Manichaean

*Karabalgasun – Stadt der Nomaden*, pp. 137–53. Despite some records in literary sources, solid archaeological evidence for cities from the Türk times is still missing on the Mongolian steppe; see D. K. Tulush, 'Gorodskaja kultura kočevnikov stepnoi zony evrazii v epochu rannich tjurok k postanovke problem issledovanija [Urban culture of nomads of the Steppe zone of Eurasia in the period of the early Turks: study problem statement]', *Archeologija Evraziiskich Stepei*, 2 (2021), p. 340.

[114] For the scale and the impact of the famous 'horse and silk trade', see Ch. I. Beckwith, 'The impact of the horse and silk trade on the economies of T'ang China and the Uighur empire', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 34.3 (1991), pp. 183–98.

[115] *Zizhi tongjian*, 226, p. 7400.

[116] For example, the former Türk Khaganate took control of an even more extensive international trade network with the help of Sogdian traders; see É. de la Vaissière, *Sogdian Traders: A History* (Leiden, 2005), pp. 199–215. On the compelling need for trade in the steppe empires in general, see Ch. I. Beckwith, *Empires of the Silk Road: A History of Central Eurasia from the Bronze Age to the Present* (Princeton, 2008), pp. 26–28.

[117] Minorsky (ed., trans., and comm.), 'Tamīm ibn Baḥr's journey to the Uyghurs', p. 283.

[118] *L.* 10 on the Chinese version of the 'Karabalgasun Inscription'. See Moriyasu's most recent edition and English translation: T. Moriyasu, 'Karabarugasun hibun kanbun ban no shin kōtei to yakuchū カラバルガスン碑文漢文版の新校訂と訳註 [New edition, translation and commentary of the Chinese version of the Karabalgasun Inscription]', *Nairiku ajia gengo no kenkyū* 内陸アジア言語の研究 *[Studies on the Inner Asian Languages]*, 34 (2019), pp. 20, 28.

[119] 81 TB 10: 06 – 3, unearthed in Bezeklik, Turfan. See Zieme's edition: P. Zieme, 'Youguan monijiao kaijiao huihu de yijian xin shiliao 有關摩尼教開教回鶻的一件新史料 [A new document on the history of the Uighurs' conversion to Manichaeism]', *Dunhuangxue jikan [Journal of Dunhuang Studies]*, 3 (2009), pp. 2–4. It confirms in detail the relatively vague and general record in the Karabalgasun Inscription: 'the Teacher (*možak*) and his disciples traversed the land in

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monks came to settle, preach, and perform rituals in the steppe, monasteries, churches, and other sedentary infrastructures needed to be built.[120]

In addition to a sedentary monastic lifestyle, the Manichaean doctrine also required a purely vegetarian diet. As noted by the Chinese chronicles, this precept was strictly practised by the Manichaean monks in the Uighur empire, who were obliged to drink water, eat spicy vegetables, and abstain from milk products.[121] Since the Manichaean monks were not involved in productive activities, a certain number of the sedentary agricultural population was no doubt required to provide the monks and secular practitioners of Manichaeism with agricultural products that the traditional pastoralist economy did not produce. Moreover, as 'the (Uighur) khagan usually consulted them on state affairs', the Manichaean monks enjoyed high political privilege in the empire, so the actual number of sedentary population who were dependent on the Manichaean monasteries may have been much larger than just the farmers who provided their food.[122] This lifestyle must have influenced the nomadic Uighurs, at least to some extent. The Karabalgasun Inscription, the official monument of the Uighur empire, records that 'since they accepted the Teaching of Light (i.e., the Manichaeism), their barbarous practices full of bloodshed changed and their state became a country of vegetarians; the country where cattle were slaughtered was transformed into a place where good deeds were encouraged'.[123] No wonder Tamīm ibn Baḥr reported that the people in the villages who had cultivated lands were 'Turks'.[124]

Along with the Sogdian Manichaean influence, the Tang Chinese influence should also be considered as a major factor that promoted the Uighur tendency towards urbanisation. Unlike the Türks who proceeded them, the Uighurs succeeded in maintaining a generally peaceful and friendly relationship with the Tang. The An Lushan Rebellion severely undermined Tang rule in China, compelling them to turn to the Uighurs for military support in their fight against the rebels and later the Tibetans. This not only provided the Uighurs with a huge amount of wealth from trade and diplomacy, as mentioned above, but also promoted the exchange of personnel between the Tang and the Uighur empire, resulting in a strong cultural influence from the former to the latter. Uighur cities and other walled structures from the imperial time have been proven to be the result of significant Tang Chinese influence.[125] This can be attributed, in the first place, to the frequent introduction

all directions from east to west, and shuttling (between the Uighurs and their homeland), they edified the people' (Moriyasu, 'Karabarugasun hibun kanbun ban no shin kōtei to yakuchū', p. 28).

[120] The double-walled complex HB 1 in the northern part of the ruined Uighur capital city Karabalgasun has been regarded as a 'Manichaean sacral complex' based on the recent archaeological data from this site; see B. Dähne, 'Karabalgasun—city layout and building structures', in *The Ruins of Kocho: Traces of Wooden Architecture on the Ancient Silk Road*, (eds.) L. Russell-Smith and I. Konczak-Nagel (Berlin, 2016), p. 36; Dähne, *Karabalgasun – Stadt der Nomaden*, pp. 27–85. In addition to HB 1, Arden-Wong also attempted to relate other structures of ritual nature to Manichaeism; see L. A. G. Arden-Wong, 'Some thoughts on Manichaean architecture and its applications in the eastern Uighur Khaganate', in *Between Rome and China, History, Religions and Material Culture of the Silk Road*, (eds.) S. N. C. Lieu and G. B. Mikkelsen (Turnhout, 2016), pp. 214–21; but solid evidence of his identification is yet to be found.

[121] *Xin Tangshu*, 217, p. 6126; see also C. Mackerras (ed. and trans.), *The Uighur Empire According to the T'ang Dynastic Histories: A Study in Sino-Uighur Relations, 744–840* (Canberra, 1972), p. 109.

[122] The long scroll 'official edict on the economy of a Manichaean monastery' lists in detail the obligations of various people dependent on a Manichaean monastery in Turfan under the Uighurs, providing a possible parallel for the situation in the core area of the Uighur Khaganate; see T. Moriyasu 森安孝夫, *Die Geschichte des Uigurischen Manichäismus an der Seidenstraße* (Wiesbaden, 2004), pp. 44–51.

[123] Moriyasu, 'Karabarugasun hibun kanbun ban no shin kōtei to yakuchū', p. 28.

[124] Minorsky (ed., trans., and comm.), 'Tamīm ibn Baḥr's journey to the Uyghurs', p. 283.

[125] L. A. G. Arden-Wong, 'The architectural relationship between Tang and eastern Uighur imperial cities', in *Frontiers and Boundaries: Encounters on China's Margins*, (eds.) Zs. Rajkai and I. Bellér-Hann (Wiesbaden, 2012), pp. 31–38.

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of sedentary Tang Chinese population to the steppe as a result of the long-term peaceful Tang–Uighur relationship (e.g. the diplomatic marriages that took place over several generations). At least three Uighur cities are recorded in Chinese sources as residences for the khatun ('queen') or Gongzhu ('princess').[126]

Moreover, the Tang cultural influence on the lifestyle of native Uighur elites was crucial in the process of urbanisation. In his flight to the northern border of Tang in 841, the Uighur khagan even requested the Tang court to lend him and his Tang princess the city of *Zhenwu jun* 振武軍 to reside in,[127] indicating that the Uighur ruling class was already very used to urban life by the end of the empire. The Chinese sources suggest that this influence might have at least partly resulted from the large number of Uighur and Sogdian elites who visited or resided in Tang territory. As early as the year 779, the Tang court issued an edict that required the Uighurs and other foreigners to wear their own dress rather than Tang dress.[128] Only the *Zizhi tongjian* records the background:

> Previously, the Uighurs who stayed in the capital usually numbered about 1000, and the Sogdians who wore Uighur dress and lived together with them multiplied the number. The city governor provided them with slaughtered or live cattle. They accumulated assets, established mansions, and obtained all the lucrative goods from the market …. Some wore Tang Chinese dress, seducing (local Tang women) to marry them. It is therefore prohibited.[129]

Due to the frequent exchange of personnel between the two empires, large numbers of Uighur and Sogdian elites stayed in the Tang capitals and major cities after diplomatic and trade missions, accustoming themselves to the urban lifestyle of Tang elites and building their own mansions in Tang cities. One can see how thoroughly they merged into the Tang urban lifestyle as, when they wore Tang Chinese dress, they appeared to be Tang nobles. When these Uighur and Sogdian elites returned to the steppe, they likely brought their urban lifestyles back with them, along with a large amount of silk and other Tang luxury goods that they were now used to.

## Concluding remarks

The incorporation of the Western Regions into Tang territory had profound impacts. Infrastructure serving the military colonies was set up along the route on the northern slopes of the Tianshan, making the previously nomadic region habitable for a sedentary population. After the Tang retreat, the Uighurs finally defeated the Tibetans in the 790s and began to take control of the region, occupying major cities, towns, as well as garrisons. A strong inclination towards urban life may already have formed among Uighur elites in the second half of the eighth century, prompted by multiple factors, including Sogdian Manichaean and Tang urban life influences. During the massive influx of Uighur and other steppe peoples into the eastern Tianshan region in 840, the rich legacy of infrastructure left by the Tang encouraged this inclination towards a sedentary life in

[126] The 'Treatise of Geography' in *Liaoshi* records that two cities during the Liao Dynasty—*Zhenzhou* 鎮州and *Hedong cheng* 河董城—were built on the foundation of a Uighur city for the residence of the khatun; see *Liaoshi*, 37, p. 509. The Song envoy Wang Yande recorded another city along his route, where, literally, the 'Tang Uighur princess (tang huihu gongzhu 唐回鶻公主) dwelt' (*Songshi*, 490, p. 14111). This should rather be understood as the Tang princess sent to the Uighur (khagan).

[127] *Xin Tangshu*, 142, p. 6131.

[128] Wang Qinruo 王欽若et al. (eds.), *Cefu yuangui* 冊府元龜 *[Outstanding Models from the Storehouse of Literature]* (Beijing, 1960), 170, p. 2056; *Zizhi Tongjian*, 225, p. 7384.

[129] *Zizhi Tongjian*, 225, p. 7384.

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the new homeland and facilitated Uighur settlement in urban environments. More than just occupying Tang urban infrastructure, the Uighurs contributed to an unprecedented rapid process of urbanisation in the succeeding centuries, especially on the northern slopes of the Tianshan. Along with traditional major cities such as Qočo and Bešbalïq, a number of new cities emerged under the Uighurs, either on the previously established Tang garrison sites or as new urban settlements. The mercantile culture of the Uighurs, heavily influenced by the Sogdians, developed significantly after they migrated to the eastern Tianshan region, at the crossroads of the Silk Road.[130] Subsequent rapid urbanisation should also be regarded as an outcome of economic prosperity in this region. By the Mongol times, some 400 years after they inherited the Tang legacy, the cities in the eastern Tianshan region had already taken deep root in their own tradition and reshaped their memory. According to Juvayni in the thirteenth century, the capital city of Bešbalïq was recorded, in the books of the Uighurs, as having been built by themselves when they migrated there.[131]

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[130] T. Moriyasu, 'Orutoku to Uiguru shōnin オルトク(斡脱)とウイグル商人 [*Ortoq* and the Uighur merchants]', in *Kinsei kindai Chūgoku oyobi ta shūhen chiiki ni okeru shominzoku no idō to chiiki kaihatsu* 近世·近代中国および周辺地域における諸民族の移動と地域開発, (ed.) T. Moriyasu (Toyonaka, 1997); Moriyasu, *Tōzai Uiguru to Chūō Yūrashia*, pp. 422–25.

[131] J. A. Boyle (trans.), *The History of the World-Conqueror*, vol. 1 (Cambridge, MA, 1958), p. 61. Juvayni claimed that his record was collected from the books of the Uighurs (*ibid.*, p. 53).

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