RELATIONS BETWEEN THE UIGHURS AND TANG CHINA, 744-840

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This article focuses on the relations between the Uighur state of the period 744 to 840 and China under the Tang dynasty and their mutual impact. The article covers four aspects of the relationship: the military, diplomatic, economic, as well as alliances through marriage.[1] Although the influence was mutual, that from China on the Uighur state was greater than the other way around. This was hardly surprising given the imbalance between the size of the populations and age of the cultures. Moreover, not all this influence from China was specifically Chinese, since a major element was in the form of Manicheism, which is Persian in origin and not a religion the Chinese liked.

The Uighur state of 744 to 840 was among the earliest established by the Turkic peoples and forms a major milestone in the development of Turkic civilization. At that time the Uighurs controlled a vast territory, their capital city being Karabalghasun, which was located on the High Orkhon River in what is now the Republic of Mongolia.[2] They were a warlike people, among whom the horse was a particularly important cultural icon for a range of reasons, including above all its use for transport.[3]

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[1]This article is slightly adapted from 'Uygur-Tang Relations, 744-840', *Central Asian Survey* Vol. 19, No. 2, June 2000, pp. 223-34.

[2]On the extent of the Uighur state and its ethnic composition, neither of which were entirely constant over the ninety-six years of its existence, see Colin Mackerras, 'The Uighurs', in Denis Sinor, ed., *The Cambridge History of Early Inner Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 320-3.

[3]One highly scholarly and annotated Japanese translation of the Uighur biographies in the *Jiu Tangshu* (*Old Tang History*) and the *Xin Tangshu* (*New Tang History*) includes them among the 'horse-riding peoples'. See Saguchi Tōru, 'Kaikotsu den' ('The Biographies of the Uighurs'), in Saguchi Tōru, a.o., *Kiba Minzoku Shi 2, Seishi Hokuteki Den* (*The History of Horse-Riding Peoples 2; The Biographies of the Northern Peoples in the Standard Histories*) (Tokyo: Heibon sha, 1972), pp. 299-462. On the transportation network in the Uighur state see also Yang Shengmin, *Huihe Shi* (*History of the Huihe*) (Changchun: Jilin jiaoyu chubanshe, 1991), pp. 149-60.

The Uighur state was founded by a kagan whom the Chinese sources call Guli peiluo. After forming a coalition with the neighbouring Basmil and Kharlukh peoples to overthrow the Eastern Türks (whom the Chinese sources term Tujue), the main power-holders in the region of the day, Guli peiluo immediately turned against his allies and subdued them to place himself in total control. His successor, whom the Chinese sources call Moyancho, took over in 747 and died in 759. The most powerful ruler of Guli peiluo's Kagan's dynasty was his grandson Bögü Kagan (reigned 759-79), but under the latter's successor Dun Bagha, Uighur power began to decline. After Dun's death in 789, the disintegration of the dynasty gathered momentum, with power falling into the hands of the chief minister entitled *El ögäsi* (Adviser of the Empire). Despite his best efforts this man failed to hold the Uighur outpost Beiting, situated close to the contemporary city of Ürümqi, as a result of which the Uighurs lost much of their western territory.

In 795 the 'Adviser of the Empire', having earlier retaken Beiting for the Uighurs, overthrew the ruling dynasty and established his own. The Tang court acknowledged him as the Kagan Who Cherishes Sincerity (Huaixin Kagan). This man, possibly the greatest of all Uighur rulers of the period under discussion here, brought about a major revival of the Uighur state. He died in 808, after thirteen years on the throne.[4] His successor, to whom the Tang court accorded the title of Kagan Who Preserves Righteousness (Baoyi Kagan), also enjoyed a long and reasonably successful reign. However, decline thereafter was fairly rapid and decisive, leading to a famine, pestilence and unusually heavy snowfalls in 839, which killed large numbers of the Uighurs' horses and sheep. The following year the Uighur state was overthrown by the Kyrgyz, and the main body of the Uighurs fled to the west.[5]

One of the most important areas of social change which the Uighurs underwent during the century or so under discussion in this article was their conversion to Manicheism, an originally Persian religion which posits a sharp dichotomy between spirit, embodying the forces of good, and matter, representing all that is evil. It was while he was in Luoyang from late 762 to early 763 fighting against the last embers of the An Lushan rebellion that Bögü Kagan was converted to Manicheism. This religion reached China early in the eighth century but, as one contemporary authority states, 'it was only allowed to be propagated among

[4]There is considerable confusion in the Chinese sources over Huaixin Kagan's death, some accounts putting it in 805, not 808. For a brief summary of the issues, together with references to the accounts of many other scholars and reasons for preferring the year 808 over 805 for the dynastic founder's death, see Colin Mackerras, *The Uighur Empire According to the T'ang Dynastic Histories* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1972), pp. 187-90. It rests to a large extent on arguments put forward by Yamada Nobuo in 'Kyūsei Kaikotsu kahan no keifu', ('Genealogy of the Kagans of the Nine Surnames', *Tōyō Gakuhō* (*Oriental Studies*), Vol. 33, Nos. 3 and 4, 1950, 95-108.

[5]See Ouyang Xiu, Song Qi, a.o., comp., *Xin Tangshu* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1975), Ch. 217B, Vol.. 19, p. 6130.

members of the foreign communities'.[6] However, there were temples dedicated to it in parts of China during the Tang dynasty, including in Luoyang, which was the most important city in all China other than the capital Chang'an.[7]

When Bögü Kagan returned to Karabalghasun, he took steps to impose Manicheism on his people.The Uighur state was the only one in Eastern Asia ever to adopt this religion as its formal faith, making Bögü Kagan's conversion of considerable historical interest and significance. Although there was a reaction against Manicheism under Dun Bagha, its power was reestablished under the second dynasty.[8] The influence of Manicheism survived for a while among some Uighur communities after 840, but was gradually replaced first by Buddhism and later by Islam, in which the great majority of Uighur people still believe.[9]

Military Relations

Overwhelmingly the most important example of Uighur military assistance to Tang China was against the An Lushan rebellion, which broke out at the end of 755 in the last days of the great Tang Emperor Xuanzong (r. 712-56), one of the most famous monarchs in Chinese history, and ravaged China until 763. In return for this assistance the Uighur rulers exacted a very high price. They were able to secure substantial political influence in China as well as a range of other advantages, including great economic benefit.

The An Lushan rebellion was by far the largest and most important rebellion in medieval China. Although the Tang court eventually defeated the rebellion, it was dealt a blow so heavy that it never fully recovered. Moreover, the rebellion unleashed forces in China that exercised a long-range impact on its history.

Uighur military assistance to the Tang court against the rebellion took place mainly in two phases. The first was late in 757 in battles for China's two main cities, Chang'an and Luoyang. The second took place almost exactly five years later and saw the Uighur forces play a decisive role in recapturing Luoyang from the rebels. In the first phase, the main Uighur commander was the eldest son of Moyancho Kagan, but in the second it was Bögü Kagan himself.

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[6]Samuel N.C. Lieu, *Manichaeism in Central Asia & China* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), p. 11.

[7]See Samuel N.C. Lieu, *Manichaeism in the Later Roman Empire and Medieval China, A Historical Survey* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), pp. 189-99 for an account of Manicheism in Tang China. For the Kagan's conversion to Manicheism, Edouard Chavannes and P. Pelliot, 'Un traité manichéen retrouvé en Chine', *Journal Asiatique*, 11e sér. 1, 1913, pp. 189ff remains the classic account.

[8]For an account of Manicheism in the Uighur state see Mackerras, op cit, Ref 2, pp. 330-4.

[9]For an account of Uighur history during this period, including reference to many primary sources, see Feng Jiasheng, a.o., comp., *Weiwuer Zu Shiliao Jianbian* (*Concise Extracts from Historical Materials on the Uighur Nationality*), 2 vols. (Beijing: Minzu chubanshe, 1981), Vol. 1, pp. 14-36, including a chronological chart of rulers and main events, pp. 21-2.

The rebellion itself may be divided into two phases. In the first An Lushan seized Chang'an in the summer of 756, having declared himself emperor at the beginning of the same year. However, early in 757 he was assassinated by a subordinate, in collaboration with his own son An Qingxu, who took control of the rebellion. The second phase began in April 759 when the rebel general Shi Siming won a great victory at Xiangzhou in Hebei, following it up by bringing about An Qingxu's death and taking command of the rebellion. In June 760 he succeeded in taking Luoyang again for the rebels but in April 761 Shi Siming was assassinated by his son Shi Chaoyi who declared himself emperor, killed his brothers and took command of the rebellion. It was not until Shi Chaoyi's suicide in 763 that the great rebellion was finally over.

Uighur troops played a role in the recapture of the capital Chang'an in November 757. A Tang force approached the city from the Xiangji Temple to the southwest attempting to retake it. When the rebels advanced from Chang'an to confront them, the Uighurs assisted in a successful attempt to prevent them from ambushing the Tang force's rear. Moving north the Uighurs cut off the rebel retreat back into the city and wedged An Qingxu's forces between themselves and the Tang forward guard to the south. It was due to the Uighurs that the Battle of Xiangji thus resulted in a major Tang victory.

On 30 November 757 the great Chinese commander Guo Ziyi (697-781), whose efforts were second to none in the defeat of the rebellion, fought a battle outside Luoyang against An Qingxu's followers. Guo's army was on the plain, while the rebels were advancing against it from a hill and thus at a strategic advantage. Suddenly a Uighur contingent descended on the rebels from further up the hill taking them by surprise and winning the day for the Tang government. A few days later the government forces entered Luoyang, while the Uighurs plundered the city for three days, following an agreement reached earlier at Chang'an.

The second phase of Uighur assistance against the rebellion was considerably more important than the first. In May 762 both Xuanzong and his successor Suzong (r. 756-62) died and China went into mourning. Shi Chaoyi used the occasion of the double mourning to solicit help from the Uighurs, claiming that China was without an emperor. In fact, although the country was undoubtedly in a most parlous state, Daizong, who as heir apparent had led troops against the rebellion, ascended the throne on 18 May 762. Uighur troops, led by Bögü Kagan responded to Shi's request and had reached as far as the northern arm of the Yellow River when they were persuaded to change their mind and support not the rebels but the Tang government. What happened was that Bögü Kagan's wife, the Katun, was the daughter of one of the Tang's foremost generals Pugu Huaien. She arranged a meeting between her husband and father, who persuaded the Kagan that Shi Chaoyi had lied to him, that there was indeed a Tang monarch on the throne and that he should support the Emperor, not the rebels.

Pugu Huaien and the Uighurs advanced as the Tang forward guard to the north of Luoyang, intending to try and retake the city. Shi Chaoyi took up the challenge and, on 20 November 762, fought a battle against the Tang in the northern suburbs of Luoyang. The result was a decisive victory for the Tang. Shi Chaoyi fled to the east, giving up the city to the Tang.[10]

If the Uighurs had engaged in pillage after the 757 victory, that which followed their 762 triumph was far more savage. One particularly shocking incident is recorded in the Chinese sources. In order to escape the plunder, many citizens sought refuge in the stupas of two Buddhist temples, including the famous Baima Temple, often regarded as a kind of cradle of Buddhism in China. The Uighurs set fire to the stupas, both standard histories claiming very high casualties from the blaze.[11]

Late in 764, Pugu Huaien, after rendering so much help against the An Lushan rebellion, himself rebelled against the Tang under very complicated circumstances which are well beyond the scope of this article. Among his supporters were some Uighurs and Tibetans. The latter had posed a considerable threat to Tang China in the period leading up to this and even occupied the capital Chang'an for a few days in 763. In the autumn of 765 Pugu Huaien renewed his rebellion with armies much larger than in the previous year, including Uighurs and Tibetans, as well as from several other non-Chinese peoples. Pugu died in September 765, and the news of his death reached his Uighur and Tibetan followers just when they were about to attack the city of Jingyang, not far northeast of Chang'an. However, just as in 762, the Uighurs were persuaded to change their support towards the Tang. This time, the man who brought about this change of heart was Guo Ziyi. The result was that the Uighurs fought not against the Tang but the Tibetans, seriously defeating them in November 765.

This was the last time that the Uighurs fought on the same side as the Tang in an effective military alliance. For the Tang, the price was very high, since the Uighurs used their services against rebellion for political and economic purposes. It is clear that they were unreliable allies, quite prepared to turn against the Tang if it suited them to do so. All cases of military assistance came in the first Uighur dynasty. It is interesting that the only case of assistance offered to the Tang under

[10]The fight against the An Lushan rebellion looms very large in the early part of the Uighur biographies in the Tang standard histories. See Liu Xu, Zhao Ying, a.o., comp., *Jiu Tangshu* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1975), Ch. 195, Vol. 16, pp. 5198-204 and *Xin Tangshu*, Ch. 217A, Vol. 19, pp. 6115-9. For translations of the relevant passages into English see Mackerras, op cit, Ref 4, pp. 54-75, where the texts of the two histories are presented side by side to show the importance of parallel passages. For translation into Japanese see Saguchi, Ref 3, pp. 313-29 (*Jiu Tangshu*) and pp. 376-88 (*Xin Tangshu*).

[11]The *Old Tang History* gives the figure of 10,000, while the *New Tang History* says more than 10,000. The figures are clearly approximations and mean 'a large figure'. See *Jiu Tangshu*, Ch. 195, Vol. 16, p. 5204 and *Xin Tangshu*, Ch. 217A, Vol. 19, p. 6119.

the second dynasty was actually declined. This was in 821 when the Tang Emperor Muzong (r. 820-4) wanted to suppress the independent military governor Wang Tingcou (d. 834), who had seized power in Hebei without authority from Chang'an. Some 3,000 Uighur troops came to give unsolicited help, but the court decided to refuse it on the grounds that the Uighurs had taken advantage of China's debt to them for their meritorious service in the recapture of Luoyang in 762 and 'been overbearing, unrestrained and difficult to manage'.[12]

Perhaps one should add, in fairness, that the details of the relationship come from the Chinese side, not the Uighur. From the Uighur point of view there was no reason why they should be loyal to the Tang Emperor, nor was there any reason why they should not exact a price. What may have seemed 'overbearing, unrestrained and difficult to manage' to the Chinese may have looked quite different, and much more defensible, to the Uighurs. To me the most shocking incident of the time was the incineration of civilians who had fled to the Buddhist monasteries. I have no wish to defend the Uighur action, but point out that again we are hearing it only from the Chinese point of view. It is quite possible that a Uighur account might have the facts, the slant and the allocation of blame very differently from the Chinese sources, which are the only ones to which the modern historian has access.

Diplomatic Relations

In diplomatic terms, perhaps the most important items recorded in the Chinese histories are that the Tang court gave each new kagan an officially appointed (*feng*) title. This was equivalent to a formal recognition by the Tang court. The Chinese term suggests that it was the Emperor himself who bestowed power on the kagan. It is in fact highly unlikely that the kagans saw it like that, since their ideology was specific that it was Heaven from whom they received their power.[13] Nevertheless, there is no reason at all to doubt that the Uighur kagans placed great value on the Tang court's recognition. Except for the decade 795 to 805 they regularly sent envoys to court to keep the Chinese Emperor informed about what was happening in their realm and to give tribute.[14]

Despite this, the various kagans and their courtiers were not entirely consistent in their attitude towards Tang China. Another community in the Uighur state with

[12] *Jiu Tangshu*, Ch. 195, Vol. 16, p. 5212.

[13] See Olaf Hansen, 'Zur sogdischen Inschrift auf dem dreisprachigen Denkmal vol Karabalgasun', *Journal de la Société Finno-Ougrienne*, Vol. 44, No. 3, 1930, p. 15. Here is cited a passage from the Sogdian version of the Karabalgasun Inscription referring to one kagan as 'the great Turkic ruler of the world who has received his splendour from Heaven'. See also Mackerras, op cit, Ref 2, p. 326.

[14] For a list of all the embassies sent between the Tang and Uighur courts between 744 and 840 see Colin Mackerras, 'Sino-Uighur diplomatic and trade contacts (744 to 840)', *Central Asiatic Journal*, Vol 13, No. 3, 1969, pp. 221-38.

substantial political and economic power was the Sogdians, a people with a strong and long-standing connection with Manicheism. Although Sogdian influence predates Bögü Kagan's conversion to Manicheism, it grew greatly after that event. Indeed, so influential did they become that they came to form a kind of state within a state which no ruler could afford to ignore.

Yet there remained a group at court which resented both the Sogdians and the new religion. One of these was Dun Bagha, the first cousin and chief minister of Bögü Kagan. In 779 the Sogdians advised Bögü Kagan to invade China, taking advantage of the mourning which followed the death of Emperor Daizong (r. 762-79). Dun Bagha was strongly opposed to the plan and, when he saw his influence succumb to that of the Sogdians, took matters into his own hands, assassinated Bögü Kagan and seized the throne himself. He then instituted an anti-Sogdian and pro-Chinese policy, one part of which was an attempt to counter the influence of Manicheism. However, it appears that Manicheism had struck deep roots among the Uighurs and it was reinstated as the favoured religion soon after Dun Bagha died in 789.

It is likely that there were virtually no relations between Tang China and the Uighur state between 795 and 805. The evidence for this is that the Chinese sources make hardly any reference to the Uighurs for those years.[15] Indeed, it appears that the restoration of relations in 805 was taken by some historians to indicate that the dynastic founder Huaixin Kagan had died. The *New Tang History* records that the official Sun Gao was ordered to Karabalghasun to offer condolences and recognize his successor.[16] However, what Sun was actually doing was not condoling over a kagan's death but reestablishing diplomatic relations after a decade of hiatus.[17]

Religion was involved also in the diplomatic relations between Tang China and the restored Uighur state of the second dynasty. Early in 807 a Uighur embassy arrived in Chang'an. There was nothing unusual about that. What was striking was that that 'for the first time they were accompanied by some Manicheans'. Evidently these religious devotees were stronger than ever at the restored Uighur court. The *New Tang History* comments tersely that the kagan 'had them take constant part in affairs of state'.[18]

Further evidence of Manichean interest in Tang-Uighur diplomatic relations at this time comes from an imperial letter of 807, written by the imperial censor and famous poet Bai Juyi. It grants permission to the Uighur Kagan, no doubt requested

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[15]See ibid., p. 232.
[16]*Xin Tangshu*, Ch. 217A, Vol. 19, p. 6126.
[17]See Mackerras, op cit, Ref 4, p. 189.
[18]*Xin Tangshu*, Ch. 217A, Vol. 19, p. 6126. See also Chavannes and Pelliot, op cit, Ref 7, pp. 275-6.

by the embassy that had arrived earlier the same year, to establish Manichean temples both in Luoyang and Taiyuan. The significance of Luoyang was that it had been the city where Bögü Kagan had been converted to the religion. According to the letter, the Emperor considered the request to be 'a matter which has as its cause the accumulation of merits and the spirit of it is pure and dignified'.[19] The court even agreed to send imperial envoys to the Manichean priests, bringing them small gifts from the Emperor, and to detail a local military official to look after the priests and furnish them with shelter. It is likely that this imperial letter was a sign of great concession to a powerful neighbour on the part of the court, probably still due to the part the Uighurs had played in the suppression of the An Lushan rebellion.

Relations Through Diplomatic Marriages

One of the most important of all aspects of diplomatic relations between Tang China and the Uighurs was marriage between Chinese princesses and Uighur rulers. Indeed, the sending of princesses to marry foreign rulers was a very common feature of the Tang court's diplomacy, as indeed of other Chinese dynasties. Together with trading silk for horses, it was one of the most important ways of preserving peace along the north-western borders of Tang China. It is undoubtedly true, as modern Chinese scholars claim, that diplomatic marriages 'promoted cultural and economic relations' between the Tang court and surrounding peoples.[20]

Uighur kagans married six Chinese princesses during the period 744 to 840. The second of the kagans, Moyancho, was granted a marital alliance in 758, his bride being the Princess of Ningguo, who was the second daughter of Emperor Suzong. He also took as concubine the Younger Princess of Ningguo, who had gone to accompany the Princess of Ningguo. Bögü Kagan married two of the daughters of Pugu Huaien. Whereas the Princess of Ningguo returned home on Moyancho's death in 759, the Younger Princess stayed behind as another katun for Bögü Kagan. Dun Bagha married the Princess of Xian'an, the eighth daughter of Emperor Dezong (r. 779-805). The Princess of Taihe was the seventeenth daughter of the Tang Emperor Xianzong (805-20) and went to marry the Uighur kagan in 821. What is striking is that, among those women whom the Tang court granted to foreign rulers as brides, three of them, the Princesses of Ningguo, Xian'an and

[19]Lieu, op cit, Ref 7, pp. 194-5. See also P. Zieme, 'Die Uiguren und ihre Beziehungen zu China', *Central Asiatic Journal*, Vol. 17, 1973, pp. 285-7.

[20]For instance, see Ren Chongyue and Luo Xianyou, 'Shilun Tangdai de heqin zhengce' ('On the Diplomatic Marriage Policies of the Tang Dynasty'), in Policy Research Room of the State Nationalities Affairs Commission, comp., *Zhongguo Minzu Guanxi Shi Lunwen Ji*, *Xiaji* (*Papers on the History of China's Nationality Relations, Last Volume*) (Beijing: Minzu chubanshe, 1982), p. 630.

Taihe were actually the daughters of Chinese emperors.[21] This shows something very special about the Uighurs in terms of their importance for Tang China among foreign peoples.

Dun Bagha's marriage with the Princess of Xian'an was definitely a sign of his positive attitude towards Tang China. He sent out a large embassy to greet her, so large indeed that not all of it was allowed to go right to Chang'an. The Princess of Xian'an went to marry Dun Bagha in 787 and lived twenty-one years among the Uighurs, dying in 808. She was the katun not only of Dun Bagha but of his successors as well, since she followed the custom of simply marrying whichever kagan was on the throne. She was the first Tang imperial daughter actually to die as wife of a foreign ruler.

The most interesting aspect of relations during the second dynasty, and the most important of the diplomatic marriages, was that between the Uighur kagan and the Princess of Taihe. This marriage was anything but automatic. Baoyi Kagan first requested a Chinese princess as early as 813, but Xianzong rejected him for several years. It was not until a third mission had come to court that Xianzong finally gave his consent in 820. As it happened, he died immediately afterwards and it was his successor Muzong who actually implemented his decision. We find a similar irony on the Uighurs side: it was Baoyi Kagan's successor who actually married the Princess of Taihe, Baoyi himself having died before her arrival in Karabalgasun.

The reason why Xianzong refused the marriage for so long was probably because of political struggle at the Chinese court. The most powerful opponent of the marriage was the eunuch Tutu Chengcui, who dominated the government throughout much of Xianzong's reign. He was murdered and his clique defeated late in Xianzong's period. It was soon afterwards that the third delegation arrived from Baoyi Kagan requesting a diplomatic marriage, and only then that Xianzong finally gave his consent.[22]

The marriage clearly meant a great deal to the Uighurs. The delegation sent to greet her included 2,000 chiefs of tribes, as well as tribute of 20,000 horses and 1,000 camels. According to the *New Tang History*, 'never before had any embassy to the Central Kingdom from any foreign state', not merely from the Uighurs, 'been as large as this one'.[23] The Chinese themselves apparently placed considerable weight on the marriage. Emperor Muzong went out to one of the gates in the city walls to see his sister off, while the masses of the people 'poured out of the city to

[21]See the still classic account of Kuang Pingzhang, in 'Tangdai gongzhu heqin kao' ('A Study of the Diplomatic Marriages of Tang Dynasty Princesses'), *Shixue Nianbao* (*Historical Studies Annual*), Vol 2, No. 2, 1935, pp. 49ff.

[22]On the reasons for Xianzong's agreement to the marriage after holding out against it for so long see Kuang, op cit, Ref 21, p. 54 and Mackerras, op cit, Ref 4, pp. 176-7.

[23]*Xin Tangshu*, Ch. 217B, Vol. 19, p. 6129.

watch',[24] with 'crowds of officials standing in order of rank to farewell her along the way'.[25] The Chinese sources also allocate considerable space to describing the Princess of Taihe's wedding ceremony in Karabalghasun.

What follows from this material is that the Princess's marriage to the Uighur Kagan was an event with major implications for diplomatic and cultural relations between the two peoples. It suggests most strongly that, with Xianzong's misgivings overcome, friendship had reached a level higher than at any previous time. It is also clear that the Uighurs had by that time become very enthusiastic about China and its cultural impact on their own society.

Trade and Economic Relations

Another very important aspect of Uighur-Tang relations, and a further one influenced by the military assistance given against the An Lushan rebellion was the trade of silk for horses. The reference to 'service to China' in the following passage is clearly a reference to the role of the Uighurs against the great rebellion.

After the Qianyuan period (758-60), the Uighurs sent frequent embassies with horses to trade at an agreed price for silken fabrics. In doing so, they were taking advantage of their service to China. Usually they came annually, trading one horse for forty pieces of silk. Every time they came they brought several tens of thousands of horses.... The Uighurs were able to acquire as much silk as they wanted, but we got only useless horses. The court found the whole trade extremely distressing.[26]

That this was an imposed trade, into which the Chinese entered only because they were forced to do so, is quite obvious from the above passage. According to a British authority, a piece of silk at that time represented the product of about one day's work, in other words it took one woman one day to produce a piece of silk.[27] The quantity of silk which the Uighurs were able to acquire was very large.

In September 773 a Uighur ambassador brought in to Chang'an a herd of some 10,000 horses to trade. The report in the *Old Tang History* carries some interesting implications for the trade. 'The payments for the horses came from taxation in grain and money, so Daizong, who did not wish to increase the burden on his people, ordered officials to make an estimate of the year's financial income and allowed the trade of only 6,000 horses'.[28]

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[24] *Jiu Tangshu*, Ch. 195, Vol. 16, p. 5211.
[25] *Xin Tangshu*, Ch. 217B, Vol. 19, p. 6129.
[26] *Jiu Tangshu*, Ch. 195, Vol. 16, p. 5207. There are varying accounts of the precise numbers of horses. Yang Shengmin (Ref 3, p. 147) cites research suggesting that over the eighty years following its large-scale beginning, the Uighurs brought in on average 10,000 to 20,000 horses each year.
[27] Arthur Waley, *The Life and Times of Po Chü-i, 772-846 A.D.* (New York: Macmillan, 1949), p. 221.
[28] *Jiu Tangshu*, Ch. 195, Vol. 16, p. 5207.

It appears that the Emperor did not simply bow down automatically whenever the Uighurs came to sell their horses. These may have taken it for granted that they could get rid of their horses, but that was by no means what the Tang court thought. The Emperor could resist if he really wanted to.

It emerges from this passage, also, that the court did not automatically pay for the horses with silk. The Uighurs could hope to secure not only silk but even money for their horses. Such money might come from government revenue, in the form of taxation, upon which there were many other demands. It is also clear from the passage that the trade in horses was very substantial, many thousands per year. This was the official state-to-state trade only. Uighurs who went to China for non-commercial purposes could also pursue trading activities on the side. There is evidence also that Chinese envoys who went to Karabalghasun for official purposes could make money by privately selling commodities from China.[29]

It is very likely that the scale of this trade was such that the Chinese never actually paid for many of the horses, which remained a bad debt. It is likely, also, that there was considerable bargaining over the prices, especially as the trade developed. The Uighurs were keen to extract as much as they could, but the Chinese constantly tried to lower the cost of horses, which they did not want anyway.[30]

Despite such occasional attempts at restraint such as Daizong's in 773, the trade in silk for horses continued throughout virtually the whole century under consideration in this article. The Arab traveller Tamīm ibn Bahr al-Muttawwi'i, who actually visited Karabalghasun in about 821, reports that the Chinese Emperor sent the Uighur Kagan 500,000 pieces of silk every year.[31] Chinese sources indicate that the decade 820 to 830 was the period when the Chinese gave the greatest amount of silk to the Uighurs as payment for horses.[32]

Another commodity which the Uighurs began trading with China for their horses was tea. It is not known precisely when this trade began, but the *New Tang History* mentions the trade as part of the biography of Lu Yu (d. 804), author of a classic work on tea. 'At the time, the Uighurs came to court. For the first time they bought tea with the horses they were driving [into China]'.[33]

The economic relations of the Uighur state with Tang China exercised a considerable impact on both Uighur and Chinese economy and society, but probably the Chinese influence on the Uighurs was greater. The silk appears to have made the

[29]Feng, a.o., comp., op cit, Ref 9, Vol. 1, pp. 25-6.
[30]See Mackerras, op cit, Ref 14, pp. 218-19.
[31]V. Minorsky, 'Tamim ibn Bahr's Journey to the Uyghurs', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 2, 1948, p. 283.
[32]See all notifications on the silk/horse trade as reported in the Chinese sources between 744 and 840 in Mackerras, op cit, Ref 14, pp. 238-9.
[33]*Xin Tangshu*, Ch. 196, Vol., 18, p. 5612. See also Feng, a.o., comp., op cit, Ref 9, Vol. 1, p. 26.

court want the comfortable life much more than their ancestors had done. The fact that it was not only the court that wanted Chinese silk suggests strongly the rise of a prosperous urban class. Both the silk and horses became a kind of currency within Uighur society, and either could be traded for another commodity. Karabalghasun became a much larger and richer city than it had been when the Uighur state was established in 744 and there were other cities dominated by the Uighurs too. Tamim ibn Bahr describes the capital as a 'great town, rich in agriculture', as well as 'populous and thickly crowded' with 'markets and various trades'.[34]

Another aspect of Uighur-Tang commercial relationship worth mentioning is that Uighurs actually took up residence in Chang'an, married, established trading enterprises and even bought up property. Some of them also set themselves up as money-lenders and were able to make very substantial profits by charging high rates of interest. In 831 the Tang authorities decided to take action against this practice when Li Shen, the son of the general Li Sheng (727-93), got himself into serious debt through alcoholic addiction: Shen 'was wasteful and extravagant, accumulating debts worth several million strings of cash'.[35] In order to help him, his son (that is Li Sheng's grandson) borrowed 'Uighur money' worth 11,400 strings of cash, but because he could not repay it, a Uighur accusation was brought forward, which led to Li Shen's dismissal from his post. The Emperor promptly issued an edit forbidding such loans. In future Chinese were to carry on financial dealings with Uighurs only for the purposes of legitimate trade. It is not reported whether the edict in fact stopped Uighur money-lending, but it is unlikely, since we know that Uighur money-lenders were still active, indeed stronger than ever, during the Song dynasty.[36]

Conclusion

The contemporary Chinese scholar Feng Jiasheng has summarized the development of the Uighur economy and society over the period 744 to 840 as follows:

The Uighurs had regarded nomadic animal husbandry as the mainstay of their economy. But due to their friendly dealings with the Tang and their control of the east-west communication lines, their economy and society underwent great changes. The trend was from nomadic to semi-settled life, from animal husbandry to commerce.[37]

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[34]Minorsky, op cit, Ref 31, p. 283.
[35]*Jiu Tangshu*, Ch., 133, Vol. 11, p. 3686.
[36]Hino Kaizabur**o,** 'Tōdai no Kaikotsusen' ('Uighur Money in the Tang Dynasty'), *Tōhōgaku* (*Eastern Studies*)**,** Vol. 30, 1965, pp. 38-9.
[37]Feng, a.o., comp., op cit, Ref 9, Vol. 1, p.23.

In one respect Feng has painted an unduly pretty picture of Uighur-Tang relations. My reservation is that the relationship was not particularly friendly for most of the time. Indeed, the assistance of the Uighur military in the suppression of the An Lushan rebellion gave a very sour taste to mutual relations. The trade and economic dealings between the two peoples do not seem to have contributed to a particularly friendly relationship. With some notable exceptions, the reality is that the Chinese and the Uighurs of those days did not like each other very much.

On the other hand, the general processes which Feng describes did indeed take place and were assisted by Uighur relations with Tang China. It is true that the silk/horse trade, the diplomatic marriages, especially that of the Princess of Taihe, and the various kinds of interaction between the Tang and the Uighurs changed Uighur society enormously. It is also true that commerce grew enormously over the century or so from 744 to 840. Feng is right to point to a trend towards transfer from nomadism to settled life as well as to a process of urbanization, especially in the main Uighur areas towards the east.

However, it is likely that there were already settled Uighur communities in the oasis cities of the west in what is today Xinjiang before the establishment of the Uighur state. What this suggests is that there were internal processes going on within Uighur society, leading in the direction of urbanization and the settled life, that would have happened even without relations with Tang China. The Turkic peoples were already developing their own civilization.

One aspect of the change which was of very little interest to the Tang Chinese writers was the adoption of Manicheism. It rates but few mentions in the Chinese histories. Yet what glimpses we do get in the Chinese documents and the Uighur sources, such as they are available, suggest that Manicheism became very important indeed for the Uighurs at that time. What is ironic, in these circumstances, is that it was from China that Manicheism was introduced among the Uighurs, since Manicheism is not a Chinese religion and has never even been particularly widespread in China. Had Bögü Kagan not gone to Luoyang to help retake the city from Shi Chaoyi, it is doubtful that the Uighurs would have been converted to Manicheism. What this implies is that even in their religion, Tang China was, however inadvertently, the source of a major social change among the Uighurs during the period 744 to 840.

If we look at the situation the other way around, that is Uighur impact on Tang China, then we can certainly see some influences. But they are very slight by comparison with Tang impact on the Uighurs. Bögü Kagan's assistance in retaking Luoyang at the end of 762 may have been of crucial military importance, but there is no proof that the outcome of the great rebellion would have been essentially different without the Uighurs. The silk/horse trade was a forced one, but its impact on the Chinese economy was but slight when seen in the context of how it affected

the Uighur economy. The Uighurs may have pressured the Chinese in favour of Manicheism, but that religion never became a mainstream one in China, or ever even came anywhere near being one.

In noting that Chinese influence on the Uighurs was somewhat larger than the other way around, I should note again that these two states were very uneven in many ways. Although the extent of the Uighur territory was very large, its population was very small by comparison with that of the Tang. Moreover, in cultural terms China was much older than the Turkic culture of the day. It was already well over a millennium old, whereas Uighur culture had had comparatively little time to develop and the main development of Turkic culture was somewhat later and somewhat further west. The imbalance in the mutual influence is hardly surprising.

Overall, what emerges is that the impact of Tang China on the Uighurs was profound. The economic and social change which the Uighur state underwent was highly significant in historical terms and would not have happened in the way it did but for the impact of Tang Chinese culture. For the history of the Uighur people the century from 744 to 840 is an extremely important period.

It is worth adding that the Uighur state is an excellent case study of how neighbouring and frequently hostile neighbours influence each other. And such a case study may have something to tell us about how peoples of differing cultures and powers interrelate and exert impact on the history of their own region and, in some cases, even of the world as a whole.