

THE STATES OF THE OGHUZ, THE KIMEK AND THE KĪPCHAK*

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The Oghuz

During the ninth and tenth centuries, the nomadic Turkic Oghuz tribes formed a principality on the middle and lower reaches of the Syr Darya (Jaxartes), in the Aral Sea region and the area of the northern Caspian. There are a number of obscure points in the history of the formation of the Oghuz people and principality in western Central Asia and Kazakhstan. The late S. P. Tolstov considered the home of the Oghuz to be the deserts and steppes of the Aral Sea region. In his view, they had lived there in ancient times before migrating from western to eastern Central Asia.¹ In spite of its originality, however, this viewpoint did not gain general acceptance.

Research in recent decades points to the conclusion that the Oghuz in western Central Asia originally came from the eastern T'ien Shan region. Oghuz historical tales relate that the headquarters of their supreme ruler or leader was at one time situated on the shores of Lake Issyk-kül. According to different versions of this legend, there was strife among the Oghuz caused by the hostile relations between their ruler and his son, Oghuz Khan. In his

* See Maps 1 and 2.

¹ Tolstov, 1948.

account of this old legend, the Persian historian Rashīd al-Dīn, who lived at the end of the thirteenth and the beginning of the fourteenth century, wrote that after a lengthy struggle, Oghuz Khan seized his father's lands in the district of Talas. Oghuz Khan then managed to subdue a large number of lands and regions, including Almalik and Alatagh. The Oghuz subsequently launched major campaigns to the west and appeared on the borders of Transoxania and Khwarazm, from where they penetrated to the lower reaches of the Itil (Volga). The new Oghuz capital, the town of Yengi-kent, was built in the regions which they had conquered, on the lower Syr Darya.²

The historical traditions of the Oghuz, which go back to the early Middle Ages, include a number of legendary episodes and superimpositions from a later period. On the whole, however, they clearly reflect the main thrust of their migrations from east to west. In the course of these migrations, which took the form of predatory incursions and wars, they reached the borders of Europe. The movements of the Oghuz covered a vast area from Semirechye and the western T'ien Shan to the Aral Sea and the northern Caspian.³

Study of the medieval sources by scholars shows that the migrations of the Oghuz began as early as the eighth century. In 742, following the decline and fall of the Kaghanate of the Western Türks, considerable changes occurred in the history of Central Asia. A confederation was formed of Turkic tribes – the Basmil, the Uighurs and the Karluk – whose leaders shared political power. The leader of the Basmil bestowed upon himself the ancient Turkic title of Kaghan, while the leaders of the Uighurs and the Karluk acquired the title of Yabghu. In the year 744, however, the Uighurs and the Karluk combined to defeat the forces of the Basmil. The head of the Uighur tribes then became the supreme Kaghan, while the leader of the Karluk retained the title of Yabghu. More than twenty years later, in 766, the Karluk left eastern Central Asia and conquered Semirechye.⁴ The Oghuz tribes of western Central Asia also played a part in these tumultuous events. The Karluk conquest of the western T'ien Shan led to a conflict with the Oghuz of the Issyk-kül region. In the course of this struggle for power, many of the Oghuz apparently moved to the southwestern regions of western Central Asia. To judge by some of the archaeological evidence, the Oghuz crossed the middle reaches of the Syr Darya and the foothills of the Karatau in this migration.⁵ From there they gradually began to penetrate to the Aral steppes and the northern shores of the Caspian. In the first half of the ninth century there are references to the presence of the Oghuz on the boundaries of Khurasan, where they carried out armed raids. Local governors of the Tahirid family were obliged to construct fortified

² Kononov, 1958, pp. 39, 41; Mirkhwānd, 1841; Rashīd al-Dīn, pp. 410–12; Neşrî, 1949, pp. 9, 10.

³ Agajanov, 1969, pp. 122–9.

⁴ Pritsak, 1953, pp. 307–401.

⁵ Levina, 1972.

outposts (*ribāts*) in the region. ⁶ Abd Allāh b. Tāhir (828–44) had similar fortifications built in Dihistan and Farawa in the area of present-day Turkmenistan.⁶ By that time, Oghuz leaders had already achieved political hegemony in the Aral Sea region, and at the end of the ninth century, the borders of their domains stretched, according to Byzantine sources, as far as the River Ural.

According to the Byzantine emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitus, the Oghuz formed an alliance with the Khazars in c. 893–8 and defeated the Pechenegs, who lived between the Volga and the Ural rivers. Most of the Pechenegs were driven from the areas in which they had long been established; only a few of them wished to remain there and settled with the people known as the Ghuzz (Oghuz). The fierce encounter between the Oghuz and the Pechenegs described by Constantine was the culmination of a struggle which had started at an earlier date. The leaders of the Oghuz, who were present on the borders of Transoxania during the second half of the eighth century, initially combined with certain of the Karluk and Kimek and attacked the Pecheneg-Kangars. The Pechenegs apparently headed a tribal alliance which also included the Pechina, the Nukarda and the Bajgird. Unfortunately, the sources provide practically no information about these peoples, most of whom were probably Turkic, while others may have been Finno-Ugrian. One of the above-mentioned tribes, the Bajgird, may be identified with elements of the modern Bashkirs. The legends of the Bashkir tribes, the Buryazn, the Tangaur and the Usergan, recount that they originally lived in the valley of the Syr Darya and in the Aral Sea region. Some ethnographers believe that they left those regions in the eighth and ninth centuries and settled in the foothills of the southern Urals and the Ural region.⁷

The tenth-century Arab geographer and traveller, al-Mas^cūdi, tells us that the Pechenegs, the Pechina, the Nukarda and the Bajgird occupied the steppe around the Aral Sea. The Oghuz, together with some of the Karluk and the Kimek, engaged in a bloody struggle against the Pecheneg confederation. The Pechenegs, Pechina, Nukarda and Bajgird, unable to withstand the pressure of their enemies, left the Aral Sea region and moved down into Asia Minor. Around 932–3 these four Turkic tribes entered the confines of the Byzantine empire.⁸ Judging by all the evidence, the events described by al-Mas^cūdi must have taken place between the middle and the end of the ninth century.⁹

The wars between the Oghuz and the Pecheneg-Kangars with their allies were long and hard-fought. Turkmen folk-tales tell of the savage battles between the Oghuz and the It-Bejene people, whom scholars believe to be the Pechenegs. The leaders of the Oghuz

⁶ Al-Balādhuri, 1932, p. 320.

⁷ Kuseev and Shitova, 1963, p. 15.

⁸ Al-Mas^cūdi, 1894, p. 180.

⁹ Agajanov, 1969, p. 129.

tribe of the Salīr or Salur played an active part in this struggle. Before the clash with the Pechenegs, they occupied the foothills of Kazykurt and the upper reaches of the Badam river along the middle reaches of the Syr Darya. In the struggle of the Salīr with the It-Bejene people, success went now to one side and now to the other, with attacks being launched by both. It eventually ended with the victory of the Oghuz, who occupied the lower reaches of the Syr Darya and the Aral Sea region. Those of the Pechenegs who remained after their defeat at the end of the ninth century were assimilated by the Salīr and other Oghuz tribes.

In their fierce struggle against the Pechenegs, the Oghuz leaders depended for assistance on some of the neighbouring Turkic tribes. Most of these tribes were Karluk from western Semirechye and Kimek from central Kazakhstan. The Kimek tribes allied with the Oghuz acquired some pastureland in the steppes of the Aral Sea region and the northern Caspian. Apparently, these groups were in the course of time gradually assimilated into the Oghuz people.

The next act in the bitter warfare between the Oghuz and the Pecheneg confederation was played out at the end of the ninth century and the beginning of the tenth. As indicated above, the Oghuz leaders inflicted a decisive defeat on the Pechenegs and seized their lands on the lower reaches of the Volga and the Ural rivers. In this dogged fighting, they enlisted the support of the Khazar Kaghanate, which had hostile relations with the Pechenegs. These historical events, which were accompanied by the mass migration of nomadic tribes, ended with the arrival of the Oghuz on the borders of Europe and Asia.

The tenacious struggle against the Pecheneg confederation, waged over a period of many years by the Oghuz, enabled them to consolidate their position around the most powerful tribal leaders. For a long time, political power was held by the leaders of the Salīr, one of the largest Oghuz tribes. The formation of the Oghuz principality in the steppes probably began as early as the eighth century, after the destruction of the Kaghanate of the Western Türks. However, the process can scarcely have been completed by the year 766. The first reliable references to the Oghuz state are provided by Arab sources at the end of the ninth century and the beginning of the tenth; according to al-Ya^cqūbī, the Oghuz had their own separate dominion (*mamlaka*) side-by-side with other Turkic tribes.¹⁰ Similar accounts may be found in the writings of Ibn al-Faqīh, who lists the Oghuz among the 'kingly' peoples.¹¹ Al-Ya^cqūbī wrote his historical and geographic work in the year 891 and Ibn al-Faqīh completed his work in 903. It is therefore possible that the rise of the

¹⁰ Al-Yacqūbi, 1892, p. 295.

¹¹ Ibn al-Faqīh, p. 168.

Oghuz principality, with its capital in Yengi-kent on the lower reaches of the Syr Darya, also dates from roughly this period.

The formation of the Oghuz principality occurred at the same time as the development of an essentially new ethnic grouping. The core of the Oghuz confederation was originally constituted by the so-called *Ok Tughra Oghuz*.¹² According to historical traditions, there were initially 10,000 families in all.¹³ Subsequently, however, their numbers were swelled by other newly arrived and local ethnic components. In addition to the Pecheneg-Kangars and other steppe tribes, they also incorporated Alans and Asī who had settled on the steppes from the Aral Sea to the eastern shores of the Caspian. These last were of Indo-European origin; they had adopted Turkic ways as a result of mixing with the Pechenegs.¹⁴

The Oghuz also incorporated Turkic elements from Semirechye. These were chiefly Khalaj, groups of Karluk and other western Turkic peoples. They included elements of the Yughra and the Charuk who had previously inhabited the valley of the Chu and the Talas. The Yaruklugh, who are referred to as one of the Oghuz tribes in the eleventh century, were probably descendants of the Charuk.¹⁵

Individual components of the eastern Turkic peoples of the steppes also played a part in the formation of the Oghuz. Chief among these were the Imek-Kimek tribes, the Bayundur, the Imur and the Kay, most of whom inhabited the area between the rivers Ob and Irtysh. They were probably subdivisions of those tribes which had become the allies of the Oghuz leaders in their struggle against the Pecheneg-Kangar grouping. Finding themselves far to the west after the victory over the Pechenegs, they were eventually incorporated into the Oghuz.

The Oghuz were made up of a number of tribes composed of a large number of clans. Mahmūd al-Kāshgharī, the author of an eleventh-century Arabic-Turkish dictionary, asserts that they had originally consisted of twenty-four tribes. Later authors, however, including

¹² The precise significance of this expression remains unclear, but three main lexical components can be identified. The first is the widely known term *ok* which literally means ‘arrow’ (or, in a broader sense, ‘branch’, ‘clan’, ‘tribe’). The second component, *tughra*, occurred in the language of the Oghuz in the eleventh century, meaning ‘the seal of the khan, the monogram or decree of the khan’. The third component is a common designation, probably with an ethnic content, for the entire grouping or tribal grouping. It is worth pointing out that the monogram of the Seljuq dynasty (of Oghuz origin), which was also known as *tughra*, depicted a bow and arrows. The symbolic content of the monogram was based on the notion of the bow as a symbol of kingly power and of the arrows as a sign of dependency and submission of the junior to the power of the senior. Hence it may be supposed that *Ok Tughra Oghuz* was the designation of a grouping of tribes and clans whose distinguishing symbol was the image of an arrow. In other words, it was an ethnopolitical union subject to leaders or rulers who enjoyed (or aspired to) the supreme prerogatives of kingly power.

¹³ Rashīd al-Dīn, pp. 410–12.

¹⁴ Al-Bīrūnī, 1966, pp. 95, 96.

¹⁵ Al-Kāshgharī, 1917–19, pp. 304–7.

Marwazī, speak only of twelve Oghuz tribes.¹⁶ The divergence between the sources may be explained by the division of the Oghuz into two exogamous groups, the Buzuk and the Uchuk, which were incorporated in the right and left wings respectively of their forces. Each group consisted of twenty-four tribes and was in turn divided into two equal parts. The Buzuk belonged to the right wing, the 'elders', whereas the Uchuk belonged to the 'younger' tribes of the left wing. The elders enjoyed great privileges, particularly in connection with the election of the Khan, or supreme ruler.

The tribal and clan divisions of the Oghuz were known as *boy*, *kök* and *oba*. The term *boy* usually denoted the tribe whereas *oba* and *kök* were applied to clan divisions. Oghuz clans and tribes formed part of larger tribal groupings referred to as *il*. In medieval Arabic-Turkish glossaries, this term normally has the meaning of 'people' or 'political grouping'. According to al-Kāshgarī, in the eleventh century the Oghuz consisted of the following tribes: Kīnik, Bayundur, Yiva, Salīr, Afshar, Bektīli, Bukduz, Bayat, Yazgīr, Imur, Karabulak, Alka-bulak, Igdīr, Uregir, Tutīrka, Ula-yondulug, Tūger, Jebni, Bejene, Yavuldar and Yaruklug.¹⁷ Various of these tribal names are still to be found among the Turkmen people today.

From the ninth to the eleventh century, Oghuz tribes inhabited the vast area of western Central Asia and what is now Kazakhstan. Their encampments were scattered along the Irgiz, the Ural, the Emba, the Uil and on the right bank of Lake Aralsor. Isolated groups reached the southern shore of Lake Balkhash to the east, where they held the impregnable fortress of Gorguz. The Oghuz also inhabited the Aral Sea region, the valley of the Syr Darya, the foothills of the Karatau and the Chu valley, but they did not always constitute a majority of the population. Their numbers were greatest in the Aral Sea region, on the eastern and northern shores of the Caspian and the lower reaches of the Syr Darya. They bordered on settled agricultural regions in Khwarazm, Transoxama and Khurasan. In the tenth century, the steppe stretching westward from the Khazar lands and the deserts of the northern Caspian, the central, Zaunguzsk and south-eastern Karakum and the Kyzyl Kum, were known as the Oghuz desert. Their camps and fortresses stretched as far west as the southern Urals and the lower Volga. Moving along the Urals and as far as the left bank of the Volga, the Oghuz tribes bordered on the lands of the Bashkirs and the Burtas.

The political and economic centre of the Oghuz principality was Yengikent, the 'new settlement'. The town lay not far from the developed, cultivated oases of Khwarazm and Transoxania, and also lay on the path of major caravan routes through the Kimek steppes

¹⁶ Marwazī, 1942, p. 29.

¹⁷ Al-Kāshgarī, 1917–19, pp. 56–7.

to the valley of the Sarysu, Kengir and Ishim, and the towns on the middle reaches of the Syr Darya and the southern Urals.

Like most other nomadic groupings, that of the Oghuz was not monolithic. Al-Idrīsī testifies to the presence of several ‘princes’ or ‘kings’ among the Oghuz.¹⁸ At the time, they had an overall supreme ruler who bore the title of Yabghu. The power of the Yabghu was hereditary, although he was formally considered to be ‘elected’ to the kingship. According to the account given by the tenth-century Arab traveller Ibn Fadlān, the Oghuz chose their rulers and decided other matters at popular assemblies. Such assemblies were nevertheless rarely held and it was the council of the nobility (*kānkāsh*) which played the chief role in everyday life. The Oghuz rulers were chosen from the leading paternal lines (*urug*) according to the unwritten rules of customary law (*töre*). This was based on the privileged access to power of the oldest member of the clan.¹⁹

The Yabghus had their own heirs who bore the title of Inal. Tutors (*atabegs*) were appointed for the education of these heirs. The wives of the Oghuz rulers bore the honorary title of Khātūn and played an important role in court life. The Yabghu had co-rulers or substitutes with the title of Kölerkin who wielded great authority. They participated in the resolution of complex disputes, acting as supreme arbiters. The commander-in-chief of the troops played an important role in Oghuz society. This commander (*sü-bashī*) had a military council, and the Oghuz *sö-bashī* frequently meddled in tribal politics, at times openly opposing the Yabghu. Between the ninth and the eleventh century, the Oghuz principality had only the most primitive administrative machinery. There were officials, including tax-collectors who collected tribute from the nomadic and settled populations. The Khan’s collectors had their own mounted detachments which employed military force to collect taxes in the event of a refusal to pay. Most of the Oghuz were simple nomads, referred to as *er*, meaning ‘person’, ‘man’, ‘warrior’. An *er* was a full member of society and not a slave (*kul*) or bondsman (*kīrnak*). An important role in the social and political life of the Oghuz was played by the Khans and Iliks who governed the tribal units. They possessed their own guards, who consisted of young, privileged slaves (*ghulām, oylan*). The next rung on the social ladder was occupied by the Beg, whose power was transmitted on a hereditary basis. There were various categories of Begs among the Oghuz, the most important of whom were the Ulug Begs and the Begler Begs. The Ulug Begs controlled the clan and tribal associations, whereas the Begler Begs commanded the right and left wings of the army.²⁰

¹⁸ Al-Idrīsī, pp. 108–9.

¹⁹ *Tārīkh-i Āl-i Seljūq*, p. 14.

²⁰ Agajanov, 1969, pp. 108–16.

The political grouping of the Syr Darya Yabghus played a noteworthy part in the political and military history of Inner Eurasia. The Oghuz conducted frequent campaigns and raids against neighbouring regions, such as Khwarazm, Transoxania, Khurasan and Volga Bulgharia, but there were also peaceful trading relations. The nomadic Oghuz acquired herds of horses and other livestock in the neighbouring agricultural lands. They also sold and exchanged skins, wool, pelts and other goods in the local markets, buying in return chiefly grain, handicrafts and other products.

The appearance of the Oghuz in the historical arena of western Central Asia and eastern Europe changed the balance of forces in western Inner Eurasia. In 965 a military treaty was concluded by the Oghuz Yabghu and the Russian prince Svyatoslav against the Khazars; a consequence of this military-political alliance was the destruction of the Khazar state, which had been a rival of ancient Rus.²¹

It would appear that Khwarazm also played a part in these events, providing military assistance to the Khazar Kaghanate. Medieval Arab historians refer to the successes of the Khazars and their Khwarazmian allies. The Khwarazmian armies managed to drive out the 'Turks' who had invaded the Khazar lands. However, a conflict soon broke out between the allies, allegedly because of the Khazars' refusal to accept Islam. Miskawayh speaks of an attack launched on the land of the Khazars by the army of the Rus. Judging by the fact that the same date is given in the Arab and ancient Russian manuscripts, the account must refer to the struggle of the Oghuz in alliance with a Russian force against the Khazar Kaghanate.²²

The defeat of the Khazars in 965 was preceded by a lengthy struggle with the Oghuz. Clashes between the Oghuz and the Khazars began on the western approaches to the Mangishlak peninsula. The Khazars barred the access of the Oghuz to the rich, open Don and Black Sea steppes. The international trading routes controlled by them, which ran from western Central Asia and the Volga region to eastern Europe, also held a great attraction for the Oghuz. All these factors determined the Yabghu's policy of establishing an alliance with ancient Rus against the Khazar Kaghanate.

The defeat of the Khazar Kaghanate contributed to the growing military influence of the Oghuz, whose political importance in eastern Europe was greatly strengthened after the defeat of Volga Bulgharia. In 985 Prince Vladimir conducted a joint campaign with the Oghuz against the Bulgars; according to ancient Russian chronicles, the prince's force

²¹ Tolstov, 1948; Dunlop, 1954.

²² Miskawayh, 1921, p. 209; Ibn al-Athīr, 1870, p. 418.

sailed along the Kama in boats while their allies (*torki*) rode along the bank on their horses.²³

At the end of the tenth century and the beginning of the eleventh, the Oghuz political grouping started to decline. The main reason for this was the rebellion among the bulk of the nomadic population, which began during the reign of °Alī Khan (who came to power around the middle or at the beginning of the second half of the tenth century) and was in reaction to oppression by officials and the attempted introduction of a system of regular taxation.

Discontent with the fiscal policy of the Yabghu was exploited by leaders of the tribes in the Seljuq group, who migrated in the middle of the tenth century from the middle to the lower reaches of the Syr Darya in the area of Jand and who led the rebellion against the Oghuz rulers of Yengi-kent. They suffered a major defeat, however, and moved away from the Aral Sea region to Transoxania and thence to Khwarazm and Khurasan. The defeat of the Seljuq leaders at the head of these popular ‘disturbances’ helped to bolster the power of Shāh Malik, the son and successor of °Alī Khan. In 1041 the Oghuz Yabghu assembled a large army and seized neighbouring Khwarazm. Two years later, however, he fell into the hands of the Seljuq leaders who had occupied northern Khurasan and western Iran. The long struggle against the movement of rebellion and the clashes and war with the Seljuqs undermined the Oghuz from within: in the middle of the eleventh century, the Oghuz principality collapsed under the assault of the Kīpchak, who had invaded the Aral Sea and the northern Caspian regions.²⁴

The Kimek

These Kīpchak, who put an end to the Syr Darya Yabghus, were a western branch of the Kimek tribal confederation. The Kīpchak cannot be completely identified with the Kimek (Yemek), however, as their common origin was already in the distant past. During the eighth century or at the beginning of the ninth, the Kīpchak entered the Kimek tribal grouping.²⁵ The Kimek federation was originally composed of seven tribes: the Imur, Imak, Tatar, Bayundur, Kīpchak, Nilkar and Ajlad. Originally from the steppes of eastern Central Asia, they migrated to the territory of present-day Kazakhstan. The migration of the bulk of these tribes (or their constituent clans) took place after the defeat of the Uighur Kaghanate in Mongolia, in the year 840, by the Kyrgyz of the Yenisei. Apparently some of

²³ *Povest' vremennykh let*, 1950, p. 257.

²⁴ Agajanov, 1969, pp. 151–8.

²⁵ Kumekov, 1972, pp. 35–48.

them, in particular the Imur and the Bayundur, joined the Kimek tribal confederation while others were absorbed into the Oghuz.

The main area in which the Kimek initially resettled was the Irtysh river steppes. Up to the middle of the eighth century, they lived with the Turkic tribes of the southern Altai and the Tarbagatay to the south and the Kyrgyz of the Yenisei to the east. At some time during the second half of the eighth century or at the beginning of the ninth, the Kimek clans and several tribes moved to north-eastern Semirechye and the foothills of the Dzhungar range, while at the same time, the Kipchak tribes of the Irtysh migrated southwards and westwards.²⁶

From the ninth to the eleventh century, the Kimek were more densely concentrated in the basin of the middle Irtysh and in north-eastern Semirechye. Individual Kimek groups and a large proportion of the Kipchak occupied the steppes of central Kazakhstan and the northern Lake Balkhash region, extending as far west as the Aral Sea region and the southern Urals. On the middle reaches of the Syr Darya, they roamed the area of Sawran and the town of Turkistan, while their eastern borders stretched to the Tarbagatay mountains and the Dzhungarian Alatau.

Up to the middle of the seventh century, the Kimek, along with other steppe peoples, had been part of the Kaghanate of the Western Türks. After its collapse in 656, they gradually developed into an independent tribal confederation. This process received considerable impetus during the ninth century from the fall of the Uighur Kaghanate. The head of the Kimek, who had previously held the modest title of *shad tutuk*, was subsequently called the Kaghan. According to Arab and Persian writers of the ninth to the twelfth century, the Kaghan enjoyed considerable power,²⁷ appointing the leaders of tribes, referred to in the sources as *mulūk* (kings). According to al-Idrīsī, power in the clan of the Kimek rulers was transmitted on a hereditary basis. The supreme ruler, the Kaghan, had eleven ‘stewards’ whose duties were also transmitted from father to son,²⁸ and he and his court nobles resided in a capital situated in the valley of the Irtysh. Al-Idrīsī records that the Kaghan possessed his own officials, a *hājib* (palace chamberlain) and a vizier, the head of the administration, and that the Kimek nobility wore costly garments made of red and yellow silk.²⁹

The Kimek principality, formed at the end of the ninth century and the beginning of the tenth, was divided into a number of domains like the later *ulus*. The rulers of these appanages, who were the descendants of hereditary tribal rulers, received their lands from

²⁶ References to the resettlement of the Kimek and Kipchak tribes may be found in the work of Ibn al-Faqīh, in the *Hudūd al-‘ālam*, and in the writings of Gardīzī and al-Idrīsī; the latter provides the corresponding maps.

²⁷ *Hudūd al-‘ālam*, 1930, p. 68.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

²⁹ Al-Idrīsī, pp. 68 et seq.

the Kaghan in return for military service. Each domain supplied mounted and infantry detachments for campaigns or in the event of a sudden attack. Although the leaders of these groupings were subject to the Kaghan, the most powerful of them were semi-independent 'kings'. Like the supreme ruler, they also had fortress-residences which were usually located in elevated positions. There they maintained contingents of their forces and stored their treasures and food supplies.³⁰

Some Kimek groups moved for the winter to the steppes between the Ural and the Emba and spent the summer as nomads in the area of the Irtysh, especially when there were severe winters in what is now eastern and central Kazakhstan. Some of the Oghuz also moved to pastures in the Kimek country near Lake Mankur, probably in the foothills of the Alatau. Like the Kipchak and the Oghuz, the Kimek bred horses, sheep, goats, oxen, cows and camels. Sheep, in particular, played an important part in their economy. Al-Idrīsī, describing the life of the nomads, writes that they 'used fat instead of vegetable oil and tallow for lighting'. The horses of the steppe-dwellers were noted for their hardiness and their ability to adapt to the harsh conditions of the arid zone. Gardīzī refers to the huge herds of horses raised by the Kimek, and Al-Idrīsī notes that the nomads preferred horsemeat to beef or mutton and made koumiss (a drink of fermented mares' milk).³¹ The Kimek also possessed cattle, i.e. cows and oxen; these tended to be owned by semi-sedentary elements, although oxen were also used as draught animals. The steppe-dwellers usually harnessed them to carts on which they placed their yurts (wooden-framed tents covered with felt). Like the Oghuz and the Kipchak, the Kimek hunted furry animals such as the fox, marten and beaver, and further took the pelts of sable, ermine and predators like tigers and snow leopards. The fur and hides of wild animals and the meat and skins of domestic livestock were sold or exchanged at points adjacent to the settled lands in the south.

The Kimek engaged to some extent in agriculture, but those involved must have been semi-sedentary and settled groups. Al-Idrīsī, describing this section of the Turkic population, writes that although they were 'nomadic, they till the soil, sow and harvest'.³² They settled on the land for various reasons, but chiefly on account of cattle plague in hard winters, outbreaks of epizootic disease or when the cattle were driven off by hostile tribes. The semi-sedentary groups of the Kimek and other steppe peoples mainly sowed millet, although al-Idrīsī reports that they also grew wheat, barley and even rice.³³ According to Fakhr al-Dīn Mubārakshāh, the settled Turkic population also tended vegetable gardens

³⁰ Al-Idrīsī, pp. 68 et seq.

³¹ Bartol'd, 1973, Vol. 8, pp. 28, 45; al-Idrīsī, pp. 69 et seq.

³² Al-Idrīsī, p. 69.

³³ Ibid., pp. 66, 69.

and even vineyards,³⁴ yet agriculture must have been underdeveloped and could scarcely have met their own needs.

In addition to raising cattle, hunting and agriculture, the Kimek, like the Oghuz and the Kipchak, practised certain crafts. The skins of domestic animals were used to make various types of footwear, vessels, quivers, bow covers and horses' harness. The women made felt from wool, wove clothes and produced felt in large pieces and pile-less rugs. Furs were also used for clothes. The manufacture of weapons such as bows, quivers, arrows and spears occupied an important place among household crafts. According to al-Idrīsī again, the Kimek and the Oghuz were skilled in iron-working and knew how to make beautiful, refined ornaments from gold and silver; the Kimek ruler wore a golden crown and clothes sewn with golden thread.³⁵

In the ninth and tenth centuries, the Kimek state was one of the strongest nomadic powers in Central Asia, but it gradually began to decline when the system of semi-independent domains sapped the authority of the Kaghans, so that the Kimek tribal entity collapsed, unable to withstand the pressure of neighbouring nomadic peoples.

The Kipchak

The history of this period is rich in major events that have not been sufficiently investigated. Minorsky, Bartol'd and others have linked these events with the external policy of the Liao empire in northern China, that of the probably Mongol Kitan. Drawing on the accounts of Marwazi and other medieval writers, they take the view that Kitan expansion was responsible for provoking a chain reaction of migration among the peoples of Inner Asia. This wave of migration began in eastern Central Asia and in the Far East with the movement of the Kun tribe, which had been attacked by the Kay people. The displaced Kun invaded the lands of the Sari tribe, which some scholars believe to have been a group of the Kipchak. Apparently, this wave of migrations affected the Kimek tribes of the Irtysh and north-eastern Semirechye and further drew in the Kipchak, who had pressed against the neighbouring Oghuz in the Aral Sea region, the northern Caspian and on the lower Volga, so that the Kipchak invaded the basin of the lower Syr Darya and seized the region between the Volga and the Ural rivers.

Medieval sources contain scant information on the early history of the Kipchak tribes. The ethnonym is first encountered in the seventh century, when the people were living on the upper reaches of the Irtysh and the adjacent steppes of what is now eastern Kazakhstan

³⁴ Fakhr al-Dīn Mubārakshāh, 1927, p. 41.

³⁵ Al-Idrīsī, pp. 68 et seq.

and the southern Altai. In the tenth century, part of the Kipchak population was to be found in areas of central Kazakhstan and to the north of the Aral Sea on the north-eastern edges of the Kara Kum, reaching western Siberia in the east.³⁶

Initially, the Kipchak were subject to the Kimek Kaghans, but gradually formed an independent ethno-political grouping. By the middle of the eleventh century, hegemony in the steppes of western Central Asia, Kazakhstan and the lower Volga region had passed to the Kipchak after they defeated the Oghuz and seized their lands. Their advance was also directed towards the borders of Khwarazm and the lower Oxus region. According to the Ghaznavid historian Bayhaqī, the Kipchak, Yigrak and Kujat settled in the steppes bordering on Khwarazm.³⁷ Judging by several historical reports, the Yigrak (Igrak) were a part of the Oghuz who had gradually become integrated with the Kipchak. The origin of the Kujat is unclear, although they may have been one of the eastern Turkic tribes incorporated in the Kipchak. In the middle of the eleventh century, during the Khwarazmian struggle for political independence from the Ghaznavids, the Kipchak, Yigrak and Kujat were drawn into the service of the Khwarazm Shahs as auxiliaries, with the Kipchak leaders acquiring particular prominence in the Khwarazmian army.³⁸

Towards the end of the eleventh century, the Kipchak appear on the map of al-Kāshgarī as inhabitants of the Aral Sea and the northern Caspian regions, occupying this region alternately with the Oghuz tribes whom they had subjugated. The south-eastern borders of their territory extended as far as the neighbourhood of Taraz (present-day Jambul), where the fortress of Kenjak Sengir was built. To the east, the camps and pastures of different groups of Kipchak extended as far as the Irtysh and the western slopes of the Altai.³⁹

The collapse of the Oghuz and Kimek states in the middle of the eleventh century contributed to the consolidation of the tribes within the Kipchak federation, whereas previously, small, uncoordinated groups of Kipchak occupied a vast expanse from the Irtysh to the Volga. They then moved far to the west, taking control of the south Russian and Black Sea steppes, so that in eastern sources this entire region became known as the Dasht-i Kipchak, and in ancient Russian sources as Polovetskoye Pole.⁴⁰ This westward and southward migration of the Kipchak from the east was accompanied by the formation of a new ethno-political grouping. In addition to groups of Oghuz, other Turkic elements entered the Kipchak federation, whose integration with the Kipchak was assisted by the similarity and cognate status of their languages and by the similarity of their economy and social

³⁶ *Istoriya Kazakhskoy SSR. S drevneyshykh vremen do nasbykh dnei*, 1979, Vol. 2, pp. 50 et seq.

³⁷ Abu 'l-Fadl Bayhaqī, 1969, pp. 153, 827.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 59–70.

³⁹ *Istoriya Kazakhskoy SSR. S drevneyshykh vremen do nashykh dnei*, 1979, Vol. 2, p. 52.

⁴⁰ *Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisey*, 1962, Vol. 1, p. 152.

structure. Thus the Kipchak absorbed large groups of Yemek (Kimek) who had migrated from the region of the Irtysh and Semirechye as far as the borders of Europe. According to a twelfth-century Persian encyclopaedist, the town of Saksin in the region between the Volga and the Ural rivers was subject to attacks by the Kipchak and the Yemek,⁴¹ and reports mention that some of the latter had penetrated as far as the Kama river at this period.⁴² These groups were probably gradually assimilated by the Turkic population of Volga Bulgharia.

The Kipchak federation also included the Bayundur, who were of Oghuz or Kimek origin; and the Baya'ut, the Kangli and the tribe of the Urani, some of whom served in the guard of the Khwarazm Shahs, were also to be found in it.⁴³ The Baya'ut were probably of Kimek origin, but the Kangli tribe was a component of the Pecheneg-Kangars. Other steppe tribes and peoples also lived in the Dasht-i Kipchak, including some of the ancient Bashkirs and the so-called Uighurs, living to the north and east of the Aral Sea. Islamic historians of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries name a whole series of Kipchak tribes.

From the eleventh to the beginning of the thirteenth century, processes of ethnic assimilation and consolidation of considerable complexity took place throughout the Dasht-i Kipchak. The western Kipchak tribes absorbed people of Oghuz, Pecheneg, ancient Bashkir, Bulghar and other origins; the eastern Kipchak merged with the Oghuz-Kimek, Karluk, Kara Khitay and others, but after a comparatively lengthy period of ethnic development, they all acquired the common ethnonym of 'Kipchak'.

There was no uniform administrative and political system in the Dasht-i Kipchak. The largest Kipchak groupings were in the region of the Dniepr, the Dniestr, the Ural and the lower Volga; such confederations or hordes were most frequently referred to by the Old Turkic term *il*, whereas the ethno-territorial groupings were known as *ulus*. In this same period, there were also a number of groupings of varying sizes in the eastern Dasht-i Kipchak, most of which were led by a Khan, and also in the Aral Sea and the northern Caspian regions along the lower and middle reaches of the Syr Darya and in what is now eastern Kazakhstan. The pasturelands of each of these groupings were strictly delimited; migratory movements were conducted in accordance with established custom and with the permission of the principal leaders and elders of the tribe. The Kipchak tribes were led by their Begs, and the tribal groupings by the hereditary families of Khans, who had their own military forces, servants and slaves.

⁴¹ Agajanov, 1969, p. 162.

⁴² *Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisey*, 1962, Vol. 1, p. 389.

⁴³ Al-Nasawī, 1895, p. 44; Juwainī, 1958, p. 465.

The appearance of the Kipchak on the historical stage altered the balance of political forces in the Kazakh steppes, western Central Asia and eastern Europe. Their southward movement further affected the agricultural regions of Khwarazm, Gurgan and Khurasan. At the beginning of the fifth decade of the eleventh century, Khwarazm was taken over by the Seljuq leaders, who defended here the last Oghuz Yabghu, Shāh Malik of Jand. This victory of 1041 helped to shatter the power of the Oghuz, and the neighbouring Kipchak did not fail to take advantage of this; they seized the Aral Sea region, and by way of Mangışhlak and the Ustyurt plateau surged into eastern Europe. The Kipchak now occupied a vast expanse of steppelands in what is now western and southern Kazakhstan, apparently by the mid-eleventh century, when we find references in the contemporary sources to important Kipchak rulers living on the lower reaches of the Syr Darya and in the Aral Sea regions with their centre at Jand. According to the historian Ibn al-Athīr, Seljuq forces from Khurasan conducted a campaign against them in 1065, when Sultan Alp Arslan brought a large army to the region of the Kara Kum which had been seized by the Kipchak and the Turkmens who had joined them. Fearful of attack, the supreme Khan of the Kipchak concluded a peace treaty and submitted to the Seljuq ruler.

The French Altaicist and Sinologist Paul Pelliot advanced the hypothesis that a large proportion of the eastern Kipchak were ruled by the Ilbari dynasty in the twelfth century and at the beginning of the thirteenth.⁴⁴ One member of this ruling family was Ulugh Khan who, in his youth, had been a slave in northern India but subsequently became sultan of Delhi in the thirteenth century. The historian Jūzjānī writes that, before being taken prisoner, he considered himself as ‘the Khan of the Ilbari and the Shah of the Yemek’.⁴⁵ According to the same account, the father of Ulugh Khan was ‘in Turkistan, chief among the tribe of the Ilbari and bore the title of Khan’; his grandfather had been a member of the clan of Abar Khan of the Ilbari, who had ruled ‘over 10,000 families’.⁴⁶

In the twelfth century and at the beginning of the thirteenth, the Kipchak Khans successfully competed with the Khwarazm Shahs, who had built up a powerful empire in western Asia (see below, Chapter 7). There were struggles between them for control of the towns along the lower and middle Syr Darya through which passed the trade routes from eastern Europe to Central Asia. The first shah of the line of Anūshtegin, Sultan Qutb al-Dīn Muhammad (ruled as a Seljuq vassal 1097–1127), was more concerned with the protection of the northern frontiers of his domains than with decisive operations against the warring nomads of the Dasht-i Kipchak, apparently because of threats from the expanding and

⁴⁴ Pelliot, 1920.

⁴⁵ Jūzjānī, 1881–97, p. 1294.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 800.

vigorous Kipchak. Atsiz b. Muhammad, who replaced Qutb al-Dīn Muhammad as shah in 1127, conducted a military campaign against Mangishlak, when the Khwarazmian forces defeated the Kipchak and their Oghuz allies and occupied the fortress of Jand. In 1133, moreover, Atsiz inflicted a decisive defeat on the Kipchak Khan, who 'enjoyed the greatest respect among the infidels'.⁴⁷ This led to serious disturbances among the nomadic tribes in the area. This Kipchak confederation was apparently headed by a dynasty from the Urani tribe. Sources from the end of the twelfth century and the beginning of the thirteenth mention a whole series of Kipchak nobles from the Urani tribe who played an important role in political events on the borders of Khwarazm. Among these are the names of Alp Kara Urani and Kadir Buku Khan – the latter's daughter was married to the Khwarazm Shah Tekish. This princess (Terken Khātūn) had a brother called Gayir Khan Inalchik, one of the pretenders to the title of supreme ruler of the western part of the Dasht-i Kipchak. Inalchik, whose sobriquet was Alp Derek, contended for power with Kadir Buku Khan (also known by the name of Kiran or Ikran), who considered himself to be the head of the Kipchak of what is now southern and western Kazakhstan. The Khwarazm Shahs took every opportunity to stir up internecine strife among the Kipchak leaders in order to weaken them: they exploited the fierce struggle of the Kipchak leaders for control of the town of Signak (the main centre of the Kipchak domains in the Syr Darya steppes) and the fierce disputes between Kadir Buku Khan and his nephew Alp Derek.

In 1195 Tekish launched a campaign in the direction of Signak against Kadir Buku Khan. However, an event occurred during the battle which was unforeseen by the Khwarazm Shah and which decided the fate of his military campaign. The rulers of Khwarazm had long been accustomed to recruiting Kipchak for military service, and many nomad leaders held high posts and titles in their state. As has been mentioned above, Kipchak from the Urani tribe formed a guard for the ruler of Khwarazm. During the campaign of 1195, however, the Kipchak troops in the Khwarazm Shah's army were reluctant to fight against their kinsmen, and at a decisive moment in the ensuing battle, they betrayed Tekish and went over to the side of Kadir Buku Khan. The Khwarazm Shah was defeated, but eventually managed to subdue Signak, using the forces of Gayir Khan Inalchik, who had been appointed governor of the town of Utrar. However, the anarchic nomads continued to chafe against control from Khwarazm. In 1215 they rose in rebellion in the neighbourhood of Jand and Signak, but were severely defeated; the Kipchak who survived the defeat were obliged to withdraw northwards into the steppes of what is now central Kazakhstan.

The campaigns of the Khwarazm Shahs against the Kipchak tribes of the Syr Darya and the Aral Sea region weakened Kipchak power and led to their dispersal across Central

⁴⁷ Bartol'd, 1898, p.37.

Eurasia, contributing to the political fragmentation of the Dasht-i Kipchak. The Kipchak were therefore unable to show effective resistance during the Chinggisid invasions and at the beginning of the thirteenth century, the Dasht-i Kipchak was conquered and incorporated into the vast Mongol empire.