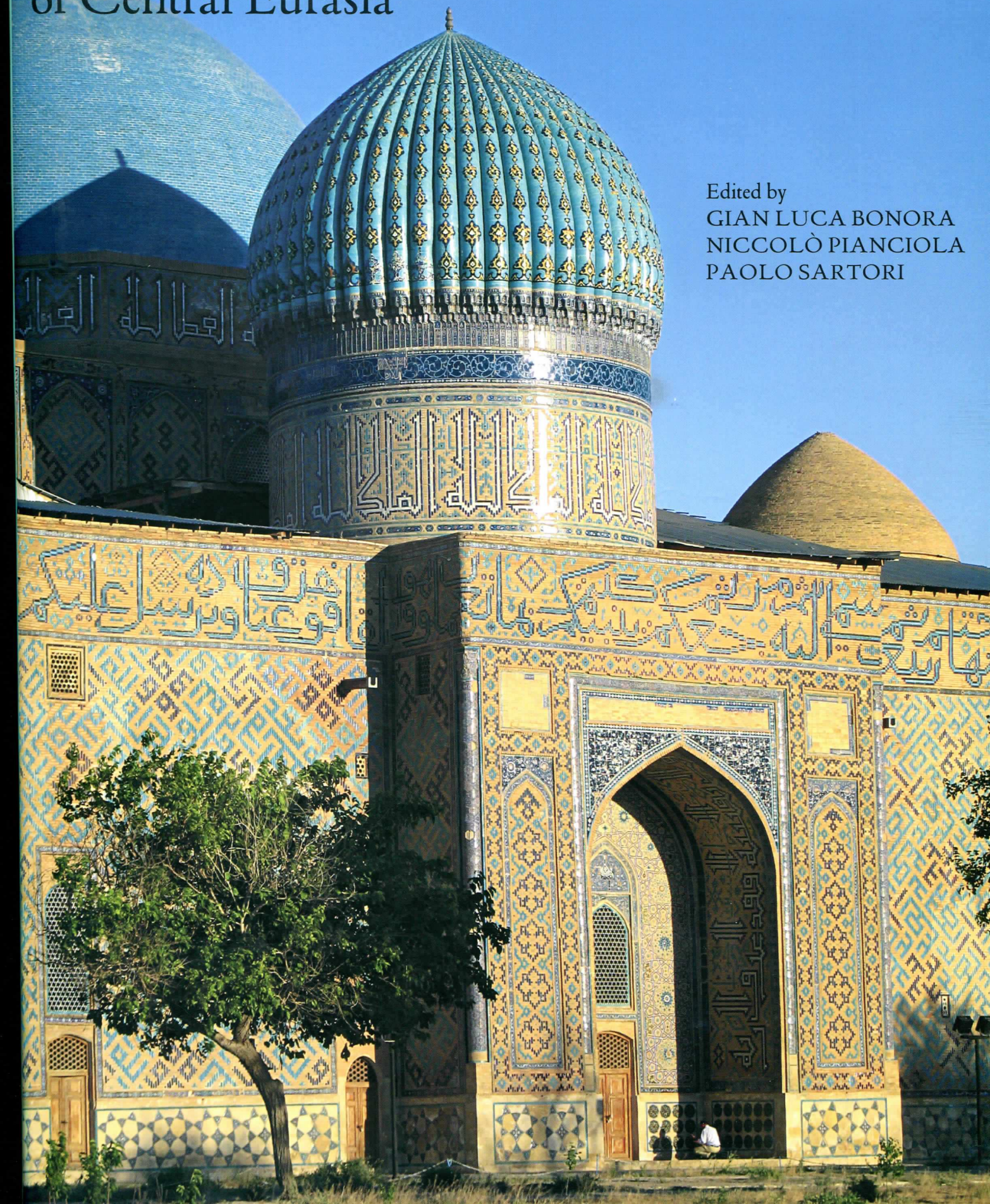


# KAZAKHSTAN

Religions and Society in the History  
of Central Eurasia

Edited by  
GIAN LUCA BONORA  
NICCOLÒ PIANCIOLA  
PAOLO SARTORI



KAZAKHSTAN  
RELIGIONS AND SOCIETY  
IN THE HISTORY  
OF CENTRAL EURASIA

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# Contents

## *Forewords*

- 11 From Vicenza to Astana  
TIZIANO TREU and GIORGIO CRACCO
- 17 Kazakhstan: a Historical-Religious Approach  
CESARE ALZATI
- 21 The Central Eurasian Steppes as a Multireligious Space in History  
GIAN LUCA BONORA, NICCOLÒ PIANCIOLA and PAOLO SARTORI

## *Part I. The Prehistoric and Ancient Eras*

- 35 The First Nomadic Steppe Tribes and Their Religion  
in the Light of the Archaeological Evidence  
GIAN LUCA BONORA
- 52 Shamanism and the People of the Steppes in Antiquity and the High Middle Ages  
FAUSTO BOSI
- 67 The Earliest Archaeological Evidence of Christianity in Kazakhstan  
CHIARA ZUANNI
- 81 COLOR PLATES

## *Part II. The Expansion of Islam and Buddhism*

- 99 Islamization and Early Sufism in Central Eurasia  
during the Pre-Mongolian Period (Eighth to Thirteenth Century)  
JEAN-MARC DEOM
- 113 Islam in the Syr Darya Region from the Twelfth to the Fourteenth Century  
ASHIRBEK MUMINOV
- 125 The Spread of Islam in Kazakhstan from the Fifteenth to the Eighteenth Century  
MERUERT ABUSEITOVA
- 137 Lamaist Buddhism in Kazakhstan (Seventeenth to Mid Nineteenth Century)  
IRINA V. YEROFEYEVA
- 153 COLOR PLATES

*Part III. The Tsarist and Soviet Periods*

- 179 Exploration of the Kazakh Steppes and Semirech'e in Russia  
from the Sixteenth to the Nineteenth Century  
IGOR DORFMANN-LAZAREV
- 199 The Role of the Oath in Kazakh Legal Procedure  
(Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries)  
ZHANAR JAMPEISSOVA
- 211 Who Can Employ Offerings to Shrines? A Steppe Mullah against Descent Groups  
PAOLO SARTORI
- 222 The Empire's Suspect Agents: Cossack Old Believers  
in the Kazakh Steppe, 1867–1917  
KARLYGASH BIZHIGITOVA
- 237 Orthodoxy in the Kazakh Territories (1850–1943)  
NICCOLÒ PIANCIOLA
- 255 Between Migration and Deportation: Protestants and Catholics  
in the Kazakh Steppe (Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries)  
NICCOLÒ PIANCIOLA and TAMARA P. VOLKOVA
- 273 Judaism in the Kazakh Steppes (Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries)  
TAMARA P. VOLKOVA
- 283 Afterword  
ANDREA GRAZIOSI
- 289 INDEX OF NAMES
- 297 INDEX OF PLACES

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**Islamization and Early Sufism in Central Eurasia during the Pre-Mongolian Period (8th-13th centuries AD)**

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The historical event rooting Islam among the Turkic population living in the territory of present-day Kazakhstan is the proselytism of the Sufi saint of Turkestan, Khwaja Ahmad Yasavi, to whom all dervishes and bakhshy (mediums) of Kazakhstan make reference during their summoning of the ancestral lineages. But the appearance of A. Yasavi during the 12<sup>th</sup> century is the crystallization of five centuries of Muslim activities that occurred at the North of the Syr Darya from the first victorious expedition of the Arabs at the battle of Talas (751) to the reorganization of the Muslim communities during the rule of the tolerant but pro-Buddhist Karakitai (12<sup>th</sup> c.). The diffusion of Islam on the territory of present-day Kazakhstan is connected with the acceleration of the urbanization, the development of trade and the appearance of a new way of life during the Samanid and Karakhanid rules. The centers of sociability of this new way of life were mosques, public baths, mausoleums, bazaars; craftsmanship played a much important role than before.

The sources for the reconstruction of the early Islamization of Kazakhstan are historical, archaeological and literary. The historical material is coming from the Arab-Persian and Turkic accounts with and also the Chinese sources, very laconic, but with key descriptions found in the dynastical annals and traveler records. The archaeological sources are represented mainly by architectural remains (mausoleums, mosques and baths), ceramics and tombs but also by numismatic and epigraphic material. Finally, one of the richest sources of information is coming from the Khwaja hagiographical and genealogical histories of southern Kazakhstan, the “nasab-namas”, which can be fruitfully compared with ethnographical sources are also interviews made during Soviet times and during the last decades of sufi masters and bakhshy describing their religious affiliation through chronological events sometime similar to well dated historical episodes.

**1. The four phases of Islamization**

In our knowledge, the five centuries from the mid-8<sup>th</sup> century to the mid-13<sup>th</sup> century can be divided in four phases of Islamization. The first one is the Pre-Samanid phase (750-820)

when Sogdian emigrants and heterodox Muslim schools of Mawarannahr find refuge in present-day South Kazakhstan. The second one is the Samanid phase (820-960) when the main towns of South Kazakhstan and Talas valley got incorporated or acculturated by the Samanids. The third is the Karakhanid phase (960-1130) when the Turkic tribes of both sides of the Tianshan adopted Islam as dynastical religion and ruled Central Asia. The last phase was the Karakitai phase (1130-1220) when the territory of present-day Kazakhstan became again an asylum for many religions and emerges the Turkic Sufi school of the Yasaviyya.

### *1.1 From 700 to 820: heterodox Muslim refugees in South Kazakhstan*

#### *1.1.1 Political events*

Before the intrusion of the Samanids (820-960) in Kazakhstan and during the rule of the Western Turkic, Turgesh (560-766) and Qarluq kaghanates (766-960) when the Chinese were suzerains in Central Asia (679-751), the territory of present-day southern Kazakhstan, urbanized by Sogdian agro-merchant colons, displayed several big towns acting as important economical and political centers (Suyab, Navaket, Kulan, Taraz) connecting Byzantium, Persia, Sogdia, Tokharistan, India and China. Semirech'e (the region south of lake Balkhash from the Talas and Chu valleys, in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, till the Jungarian gate on the east) and the other areas of present-day southern Kazakhstan were also an asylum for various Sogdian, Turks, Chinese, Syrian, Indian groups, professing different religions: Zoroastrism (from 6<sup>th</sup> c. onward: tower of fire and necropolis in Navaket/Krasnaya Rechka, temple of fire in Jamukat/Kostobe, Otrar/Kok-Mardan and Turkestan/Sidak), Buddhism (from 7<sup>th</sup> c. onward: 7 temples and monasteries in the Chu valley), Manichaeism (from 7<sup>th</sup> c. onward: community in the Arys valley, Taraz, Navaket, chapels in Balasaghun/Burana and Chigilbalyk), Nestorianism (from 8<sup>th</sup> c. onward, churches in Taraz and Merke, monastery and church in Suyab/Ak Beshim, metropolitan in Navaket) and the cult of natural elements and ancestors (Turkic holy mountain in the Chu-Ili range and anthropomorphic steles in all Tianshan foothills and high valleys of Semirech'e).

When the Arab armies conquered Mawarannahr (706-715) under the general Qutayba b. Muslim, governor of Khorasan (705-715), the king of Chash, Baghatur tudun, passed an agreement with the Arabs and became master of the middle Syr Darya region from the Tashkent oasis till Tarband (Otrar) where he had his residence already in 712. After the death of Qutayba, Islam receded in Mawarannahr and the Turgesh general Kulchur used the opportunity of fights between Arab clans to occupy the Zeravshan valley with the Sogdian aristocracy (721) but, the same year, the new governor of Khorasan al-Harasi (721-22) reacted by executing the Sogdian nobility (including the king Dewastich of Pendjikent). From 728 to 737, the Turgesh kaghan Suluk, in alliance with the Sogdians, defeated the Arabs who kept only Samarkand and Dabusiyya until they were defeated by Asad b. Abdallah al-Qasri (735-38) at the head of Syrian troops levied against the Kharijite revolt of al-Harith, the ex-governor of Khorasan. After the assassination of the Turgesh kaghan Suluk and the death of Asad (738), the new governor of Khorassan, Nasr b. Sayyar (738-748) recovered Mawarannahr and made a pact with the ruler of Chash to send al-Harith in exile in Farab

(Otrar). In 747, at the climax of fights between Nasr b. Sayyar and other Arab factions (al-Harith and Juday al-Kinani, head of the Yemenite tribes), Abu-Muslim, the agent of the Abbasid secret organization in Khorasan, took the black banners calling for the end of the Umayyads. In 749, he had won over all the antagonists and in 751, answering to the request of the prince of Chash whose father had been executed by the Chinese, he sent his general Ziyad b. Salih against the Chinese and Turkic armies at the battle of Talas and won it thanks to the ultimate support of the Qarluqs. After the departure of the Chinese and the eclipse of the Turgesh kaghanate by the Qarluqs (766), the wealth of the region was deprived from its eastern influx (China was then engulfed in civil war) and the object of struggle between the Turkic tribes (the Oghuz, Basmil, Uighur who were occupying Jungaria and Turfan region and the Qarluq replacing the Turgesh dynasty).

At the turn of the 8<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> centuries, present-day southern Kazakhstan was divided between the Qarluqs, master of the Tianshan piedmonts till Chach (Tashkent), and the Oghuz implanted in many towns along the Syr Darya and in the Karatau foothills. Their wealth became tributary of their economical and military relations with Mawarannahr almost completely Islamized under the Khorasan governor Mamun (809-813, caliph 813-33). At that time, although the Abbasid vizier Fazl b. Sakhl made a reprisal expedition against the Qarluqs in Otrar and Turkestan (812-17) because they refused to pay their tribute to the Arabs, the relations were calm.

### 1.1.2 *The religious situation*

During the Pre-Samanid period the penetration of Islam into Kazakhstan occurred through the immigration of heterodox Islamic movements bearing the generic name of Khurramiyya (sectarian anti-caliphate groups with ideologies mixing Iranian local religions with Islamic teachings)<sup>1</sup> who found refuge at the north of the Syr Darya, they are the Kharijite, Kaysanite and Mubayyidite movements.

The Kharijiyya was a popular anti-caliphal egalitarianist movement generally advocating militancy (*Jihad*) and strict adherence to the Koran and the way of the prophet, very active during the two first centuries of Islam. The rebellion of al-Harith b. Surayj against the Umayyad's politics in the Khorasan province brought an enormous mass of newly converted Iranians and Central Asians (732-37). The Turgesh supported actively their revolt in Mawarannahr. When defeated by the Syrian army of Asad al-Qasri in 737, al-Harith and his army sought refuge among the Turgesh in Chach and was later exiled in Otrar (which at that time was in a position of political dependence from Chach). In 745, al-Harith came back in Mawarannahr but was killed at the eve of the Abbasid revolution in 747. After his death, the spiritual leader of the Kharijite movement (also called *Murji'ah*) became Abu Hanifa (699-767) the *imam* theologian who is at the base of the Hanafite school of Law officially

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<sup>1</sup> Daftary F., *Sectarian and national movements in Iran, Khurassan and Transoxiana during Umayyad and early Abbasid times* in Asimov M.S. and Bosworth C.E. (eds.) *History of civilizations of Central Asia*. Vol. IV, Unesco, Paris, 1998, 41-59.

recognized by the Abbasids<sup>2</sup>. Possibly, some Turks of present-day South Kazakhstan were followers of the Kharijite movement and, most probably, would join later the rebellion of Ishaq-at-Turk and al-Muqanna in the 760s and 770s.

The Kaysaniyya was a Shiite movement claiming the caliphal lineage to the Alids (Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law Ali b. Abu Talib), born out of the Kufan revolt of al-Mukthar (685-7) and launched on behalf of Ali's son Muhammad b. al-Hanafiya declared to be the Mahdi (saviour *imam*). The Kaysaniyya, regrouping the bulk of the Shiites, the anti-Umayyad dissidents supporting the Abbasid secret organization (claiming leadership to an imam descendant of the Prophet's uncle Abbas) and many Persian mixed Zoroastrian-Islamic schools (beliefs of transmigration of souls and cyclical history of eras) joined the Abbasid revolution led by Abu-Muslim. However, after his execution by the caliph al-Mansur in 755, the Kaysanites and Khajirites united under various (Abu-) Muslimite factions (Ishaq al-Turk and al-Muqanna).

The Abu Muslimiyya was a neo-Mazdakite movement initiated after the death of Abu-Muslim by his former propagandists in Central Asia. The first was Ishaq al-Turk, a Persian missionary among the Turks who around 757 preached Zoroastrian messianic ideas based on the return of Abu Muslim as a prophet. Executed by the Abbasid governor, the followers of Abu Muslim integrated the Mubbayidites in 776.

The Mubayyda (i.e. "wearers of white") were regrouped around Al-Muqanna (the Veiled One), ex-commander of Abu Muslim native from the region of Merv, who started to preach in the early 770s that he was an incarnation of the divine spirit of Abraham, Jesus, Muhammad and Abu Muslim commissioned to restore justice and eliminate the Abbasids. Unpopular in Khorasan, he arrived in the Kashkadarya valley where he managed in 776 to raise a rebellion spreading till Samarkand, occupied with Qarluq army support, and Termez. Finally in 779 after the one year siege of Nevaket (40 km SW of Kesh) won by the Abbasid army of al-Harashi, al-Muqanna committed suicide. This four-years long rebellion let Sogdiana in ruins and marked the definitive victory of Islam in Mawarannahr. Probably, both Sogdian peasants who joined the revolt against the landowning class and the local landowners (*dihqans*) who lost their political power (ceasing to mint their money from that time) emigrated in the Turkic lands of the southern steppe. The Sogdian material culture is well represented in Otrar oasis and Talas valley during the 9<sup>th</sup> c. Moreover, the Mubayyidites who are said to have continued their movement till the 12<sup>th</sup> c. might have followed their Turkic Qarluq supporters to the north of the Syr Darya because, according to Yakubi (d. 897), the Qarluq yabghu converted to Islam under al-Mahdi around 780<sup>3</sup>. If he did so he embraced the heterodox creed of the Mubayyidites because the Chinese sources report that the Qarluqs

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<sup>2</sup> Muminov A., *Traditional and Modern Religious -Theological Schools in Central Asia in Political Islam and Conflicts in Russia and Central Asia*, L.Johnson and M.Esenov (Eds), Stockholm, 1999, 101-111.

<sup>3</sup> Barthold V.V., *Sochineniya*, T.11, part 1, Moskva, 1963, 31



allied with the “wearers of white” and the Tibetans defeated the Uighur general Il-Ugasi in 790 near Beshbalyk<sup>4</sup>.



Fig.1- aerial view of Otrar tobe (III-XVII AD)



Fig.2- aerial view of Ak-Beshim (Suyab, VI-XIII AD) which included 3 Buddhist and 2 Nestorian buildings.

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<sup>4</sup> Klyashtornyi objects this possibility and assumes that the dressing of white clothes is the attribute of the Manichaeans. See: Klyashtornyi, S.G and Sultanov, T.I. *Gosudarstoa I narody Evraziiskikh stepei. Drevnost i srednevekov'e*, St.Petersburg, 2000, 104-107. On the relation between Manichaeans and Mubayyidites see part 4 here under.

## 1.2 From 820 to 960: Islam penetrate South Kazakhstan with the Samanid conquest

### 1.2.1 Political events

The Qarluqs offered their military service to the Samanids and provided them the products of the nomadic market: soldiers, slaves, metal, horses, felt, leather. With the military campaigns of the Samanids in Mawarannahr to unify all the territory and to conquer Khorasan, the Qarluqs in Semirech'e and the Oghuz in South Kazakhstan became the object of the Samanid expansion motivated by their need to control the silver mines of Semirech'e (three mines in the upper Talas valley from which Mawarannahr made coins till the 12<sup>th</sup> c.), the Turkic slaves and the Turko-Sogdian market-towns without the unreliable nomadic mediation. They took Isfijab in 840, Otrar and Shavgar (Turkestan) in 859 and Taraz in 893 pushing the Qarluq Chigil clan to move their court from Taraz to the Chu valley and Kashgar. The Chigil and Yaghma clans of Kashgar advised by Muslim political activists (among whom the sheikh of Nishapur Kelemati)<sup>5</sup> converted to Islam and established the Karakhanid dynasty (minting their own currency) under Musa Boghra-khan in 960.

### 1.2.2 The religious situation

The two centuries of the Samanid occupation of South Kazakhstan is covered by several Arab sources. For the 9<sup>th</sup> century, we have the records of Ibn Khurdadhbih (c. 846) and Qudama (c.889)<sup>6</sup> describing the trade road from Bukhara to China along sixteen towns of the Kazakh Tianshan foothills. In their accounts, the only mention of Muslim converts in the territory of present-day Kazakhstan concerns Farab (Otrar) where the "garrison is made of Muslims and Turk Qarluqs". But in the 10<sup>th</sup> century, we have the report of al-Makdisi (c. 985). Among its description of twenty-six towns of the southern steppe and Semirech'e, only ten of them doesn't have a mosque showing how extensive had been the spread of Islam during the Samanids<sup>7</sup>. According to al-Makdisi, some of these towns, like Balaj (Baba-Ata) and Beruket (Tamdy), at the eastern piedmonts of the Karatau were garrison towns of the Oghuz against the Qarluqs<sup>8</sup>.

The first reports about Islamization among the Oghuz is coming from Ibn Fadlan (c. 920) who recorded that in 921-922 the Oghuz were trading with Central Asia Muslim

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<sup>5</sup> According to the reading of Samani (1113-1167), *Kitab al-Ansab* by Barthold V.V., *Sochineniya*, T.2, part 1, Moskva, 1963, 245-46 but considered critically by Jurgen P., *Nouvelles pistes pour la recherche sur l'histoire de l'Asie Centrale a l'époque Karakhanide (Xe-début XIIIe siècle)* in *Cahiers d'Asie centrale*, 9 : *Études karakhanides* (ed. V. Fourniau), 2001, 31 note 37.

<sup>6</sup> Ibn Khordadhbih, *Kitab al-Mamalik wal-Masalik*, de Goeje M. (ed. and transl.), Leiden, 1889, 28-29 and Qudama b. Jafar, *Kitab al-Kharaj Wa-Sina' At Al-Kitaba*, Heck L. (ed. and transl.), Leiden, 2002, 205.

<sup>7</sup> al-Makdisi, *Askhan at-takasim fi-ma'rifat al-akalim*. Translated and commented by Volin S. *Svedeniya arabskikh istochnikov IX-XVI vv. O doline reki Talas n smejnikh raionakh in Trudy instituta istoriya arkheologiya I etnografiya*, t.8, 1960, 80-83.

<sup>8</sup> Called Turkmen by al-Makdisi at the contrary of Kashgari for whom the Turkmen are the Oghuz. On the Turkmen denomination referring to converted Turkic Muslims starting with Qarluqs and followed by Oghuz see: Klyashtorny S., *Les Samanides et les Karakhanides: une tape initiale de la geopolitique imperiale* in *Cahiers d'Asie centrale*, 9 : *Études karakhanides* (ed. V. Fourniau), 2001, 35-40.

merchants on the Volga. At the end of the 10<sup>th</sup> c. the anonymous “Hudud al-Alam” (c. 982) mention similar conversion among the Oghuz traders of Sutkent (left Syr Darya) and Ibn Haukal (c. 977) reported that under the Samanids, Oghuz and Qarluq tribes near Sutkent became Muslims adding also that in the triangle Farab (Otrar) - Kenjid (Karaspan) – Chach are found “one thousand houses of Turks” who converted<sup>9</sup>. He mentioned also that Oghuz were living in Sauran (Karatobe) but according to al-Makdisi (c. 985) the town (which had a mosque in its center) was a fortified place against the Oghuz and the Kimaks.

Among the other early Turkic Muslims are the numerous Turkic military guards (at the beginning Qarluq and later Oghuz and Seljuq) of the Abbasid, Tahirid and Samanid dynasties. From the beginning of the Abbasid rule, Turkic guards (*ghulam* or *mamluk*) were recruited as professional bodyguards of the caliph, but from the end of al Mamun’s rule (813-33), they became the nucleus of the caliph’s army. The caliph al-Mutasim (835-42) relied on 3,000 Turkic *ghulam* and from the reign of the Samanid Nasr II (914-953) till the fall of the Samanids the Turkic generals and their *ghulams* were the holder of the real power at court. Leaving progressively the Samanid service, they built their own dynasties; the Ghaznavids (977-1186) with Sebuktegin, a Qarluq general from Barskhan (Issyk-kul), and the Seljuqs, their defeaters at the battle of Dandanqan in 1040, under Toghril, founder of the sultanate (1055-1118) whose soldiers had fought at the service of all the rival courts of the time (Samanid, Ghaznavid and Karakhanid). It is generally accepted that the father of al-Farabi (878-950) was a *ghulam* in the caliphal bodyguard of Baghdad. Al-Farabi was born in Otrar (Farab) and worked at the court of the Abbasid prince Sayf ad-Dawlah in Aleppo (Syria) on Aristotelian and political philosophy.

If the Samanids converted Nestorian churches into mosque in Taraz and Merke, Manichaeans communities were active in Semirech’e and South Kazakhstan because according to a list of a Uighur Manichaean manuscripts found in Turfan (middle of 9<sup>th</sup> century), in the land of “Golden Arghu” (the region between Balasaghun and Taraz according to Kasghari), there was a diocese counting four monasteries: in Chigilbalyk (near Taraz, diocese center), Yagankent and Kosu (near Isfijab) and Ordukent in the Chu valley<sup>10</sup>. Interestingly, the name of their dynastical supporter, the khan Chigil Arslan il-Tirguk Alp Burghuchan Alp-tarkhan-beg, is also found in a list of Turkic aristocrats written in 1025 and discovered on rocks at the north of Talas in Kyrgyzstan.<sup>11</sup>

### 1.3 From 960 to 1130: Islam becomes dynastical religion under the Karakhanids.

#### 1.3.1. Political events

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<sup>9</sup> Ibn Fadlan, *Risala* ; *Hudud al-Alam*, Ibn Hawkal, *Kitab Surat al-Ard*. The 3 authors are quoted by: Golden P., *Religion among the Qipchaqs of Medieval Eurasia* in *Central Asiatic journal*, 42, 1998, 232-234.

<sup>10</sup> Klyashtorny, S.G *Manichaean monasteries in the land of Arghu* in *Studia Manichaica*, IV, Berlin, Berlin, 2000, 374-379.

<sup>11</sup> The list is written in Sogdian (the latest dated Sogdian inscription) and is located in the Kulansay gorge on the northern slopes of the Kara-Jilga range 3,5 km north of the medieval town of Tekabket (Talas). See: Livshits V.A., *Sogdiitsy v Semirech’e: lingvisticheskie I epigraficheskie svidetel’sva* in *Krasnaya Rechka i Burana*, Frunze, 1989, 84.

In the lower Syr Darya, the Oghuz, already partially converted to Islam at the beginning of the 9<sup>th</sup> century, expelled the Seljuq clans to Khorasan around 940. By that time the Karakhanid conquest started under the rule of two cousins, Ali b. Musa (Kara Khan, head of the dynasty, centered in Balasaghun) and Hasan b. Suleyman (Boghra Khan, in Kashgar). The latter started the conquest of Isfijab (990), Ferghana (993-2), Samarkand and Bukhara (992) but, after his death, his nephew Nasr b. Ali had to reconquer these Samanid towns (996-999). In the next decades a number of wars between appanages followed. The internecine struggle for power lasted until the division of the Karakhanid dynasty in two parts in 1032: the Eastern Khanate center in Balasaghun (later Kashgar) led by Suleyman with Muhammad b. Yusuf and Muhammad b. Nasr (Ferghana) and the Western Khanate based in Uzgend (later Samarkand) led by the prominent leader Ibrahim b. Nasr Tamghach Khan. With the sedentarization of the Karakhanid Muslim dynasty in the towns of Central Asia, the most martial and pastoral fraction of the original Qarluq aristocracy departed from the Karakhanids and kept a multireligious profile in their headquarters in Northeastern Semirech'e (Kayalyk, Dungen, Talgar) and close commercial and cultural relations with the Uighurs and China. In 1043, the Oghuz armies after their occupation of Khorezm were beaten by the Seljuqs and after their return in the Sydrarya delta they were invaded by the Kipchaks. The Seljuq, recent conquerors of Persia, started to assault the Karakhanid centers in Mawarannahr but they had to face a new wave of nomadic incursions coming from the Qarluq and Kangli tribes

### 1.3.2 *The religious situation*

The conversion of the Karakhanids to Islam is recounted by the historian Jamal al-Qarshi (born in Almalyk in 1230) who relied on a lost history of Kashgar<sup>12</sup>. According to this partially legendary narrative, the khan of Kashgar who had lost Taraz to the Samanid Ismail b. Ahmad was Ogulchak Kadyr Khan. He welcomed Nasr b. Ahmad, the brother of Ismail b. Ahmad and offered him to settle in Artux (town near Kashgar) where he received caravan of traders from Bukhara and built a mosque. The nephew of Ogulchak, Satuq converted and gathered an army of 300 knights from Kashgar and Ferghana, together they assaulted Kashgar. After the conversion of Satuq Bughra Khan and the adoption of Islam as dynastical religion by his son Musa in 960, the Karakhanid started a war outside the Samanid realm against Khotan in the East and Isfijab in the West. In the next decades the 2 branches of the Karakhanids initiated the building of Islamic architectural complexes in their political centers, in Balasaghun (site of Burana), Taraz (Karakhan and Aisha Bibi), Uzgend and Shah Fazil (Ferghana).

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<sup>12</sup> by Abu'l-Futub 'Abd al-Ghafir b. Husayn al-Alma'i (9<sup>th</sup> c.). Translation of this passage of Jamal Qarshi's *Mulhaqat as-Surah* by Jurgen J.P., *Nouvelles pistes pour la recherche sur l'histoire de l'Asie Centrale a l'époque Karakhanide (Xe-début XIIIe siècle)* in *Cahiers d'Asie centrale, 9 : Études karakhanides* (ed. V. Fourniau), 2001, 19-21.

Even if the historical accounts covering that period are numerous<sup>13</sup>, they consist mainly in the record of political events and enlist towns and leaders without reflecting the state of the Islamization in the territories to the north of Mawarannahr. Nevertheless, we do know that Karakhanid sovereigns were fervent supporters of the Sunni branch of Islam and of the Hanafite school of religious Law (*Madhhab Hanafiyyah*), helping the caliphate to fight the heterodox Shiite and Ismailite sects and encouraging the erection of mosques, madrasas, mausoleums, hospitals and large bath-houses all benefiting from *waqf* (pious endowments) revenues. This period is also characterized by the appearance of the first Turkic Muslim culture illustrated by authors like Kashgari and Yusuf Balasaghuni. Mahmud al-Kashgari (1008-1080?) was born in Kashgar from parents originally from Barskhan (Barskaun, on the southern shore of the Issyk-kul lake). He traveled all around the Karakhanid empire in Semirech'e and Tarim basin, and went to Baghdad where he studied Arabic philosophy and sciences. He wrote the *Diwan lughat at-Turk* ("Compendium of the Turkic Dialects"), in the Middle Turkic dialect spoken by the Karakhanids. Yusuf Khass Hajib Balasaghuni (1019-1085) was born in Balasaghun and wrote the *Kutudgu bilig* ("The Wisdom of Royal Glory") in the style of the contemporary Iranian Islamic "mirrors for princes" and completed in Kashgar around 1070.

Kashgari relates how the Karakhanids imposed Islam on other religions in the eastern Tienshan and Ili valley regions: "We rushed on them as a stream, we appeared in the cities, we destroyed Buddhist temples, we foretold on their idols"<sup>14</sup>, The territory of present-day southern Kazakhstan remained a place of religious tolerance. Nestorianism especially continued to develop as attested by the building of a monastery complex in Ordukent/Ak Beshim (10-11<sup>th</sup> c.) and by the findings of *kairak* Nestorian stones with Syriac inscriptions in Navaket. During that period Nestorianism expanded also in Northwestern Semirech'e among the non-Muslim Qarluqs (the infidels who at last assaulted the Karakhanids) of Talgar and Kayalyk and further till Jungaria because the Naimans and the Mongol Kereits became Nestorian during that time (11<sup>th</sup> century).

The traditional Zoroastrian beliefs are incorporated inside the Muslim urban culture as testified by the presence of fire altars made in ceramics with stamped ornaments in the 10-12<sup>th</sup> centuries houses of Otrar-tobe.

#### 1.4 From 1130 to 1220: Islam under the Karakitai

##### 1.4.1 Political events

In 1133, the Eastern Karakhanids asked the assistance of the Western Liao or Karakitai dynasty against the Qarluq and Kangli tribes, service in return of which their leader Yelu Dashi took Balasaghun and removed the Karakhanid command. The Karakitais conquered further all Karakhanid and Seljuq possessions in Central Asia (1137 battle of Khujand, 1147 battle of Qatwan) and became suzerains of the last Karakhanid khanate of

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<sup>13</sup> The main authors are al-Idrisi (1100-1165), Samani (1113-1167), al-Athir (1160-1233), Yakut (1179-1229) and others all used by W.Barthold in his *Turkestan down to the Mongol invasion*, London, 1968.

<sup>14</sup> Goryacheva V.D., Peregudova S.Y, *Buddhist monuments of Kyrgyzia*. In: *Vestnik Drevnei istorii*, 2, 1996, p. 167.

Ferghana, of the Seljuqs but also of the Kangli, the Kipchaks and the Khorezm shah. Their empire weakened by rebellions and internal wars among its vassals. In 1200, the shah of Khwarazm Ala ad-Din Muhammad b. Tekish (1200-1220) had already won the supremacy against the Seljuqs in Iran and started to defeat the Karakitai rule in Mawarannahr and in the Steppes to the north (with Taraz included in their empire). Further north, the Naimans who fled from the Altai region in front of the ascension of Genghis Khan were welcomed into the Karakitai empire in 1208. In 1211 their prince Kuchlug captured Yelu Zhilugu, ending the Karakitai rule in central Asia. However, the Mongols captured and killed Kuchlug in 1218 and fully conquered Central Asia by 1220.

#### 1.4.2 The religious situation

If the Karakhanid period represented an economical and cultural golden age for Central Asia, the pre-Mongol period was a period of political and social turmoil. Dynastical fights and clanic conflicts between and among the Karakhanids, Seljuqids, Qarluqs, Oghuz, Kipchaks culminating with the decomposition of the Karakitai house and the occupation of the territory of present-day Kazakhstan by the Khwarazm shah from the west and the Naimans from the east exacerbated the sense of moral disaster and brought the previously individual and intellectual mystic Sufi teachings at a more popular and social level.

The tradition of Sufi Shayks teaching the path of love, knowledge and annihilation in God rose in Iraq during the 8<sup>th</sup> century, it developed in Khorasan and spread in Mawarannahr (Ferghana and Bukhara) during the 10<sup>th</sup> century. With the rules of the Karakhanid and Karakitai, the Turks, already largely Islamized, had traditional popular epic and poetic singers like the *ozans*<sup>15</sup> who were progressively replaced by Sufi dervishes established in *khanaga* (dervish convent) built with the support of the ruler (as attested by the *khanaga* built inside the walls of Balasaghun). These Shayks (called *baba* or *ata*) opened their own *silsila* (chain of spiritual authority) on the model of contemporaneous Sufi masters of Mawarannahr like Yusuf Hamadani (d. 1140) who worked in Merv and Herat or Gilani (d. 1166) who attracted crowds to his sermons and who diffused philanthropic ideas similar to those of Ahmad Yasavi.

However, since the Karakitai period left no Islamic monuments in Kazakhstan, we can infer that the political support to the building of Islamic edifices might have receded.

## 2. The archaeological evidences of the Islamization

The archaeological testimony of the diffusion of Islam in Kazakhstan can be divided in two periods, Samanid and Karakhanid. The earliest standing Muslim architectural monument of Kazakhstan belongs to the Karakhanid and consists of the five memorial

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<sup>15</sup> M.F. Koprulu, *Early Mystics in Turkish literature*, (transl. by G.Leiser and R.Dankoff), London-New York, 2006, 8

buildings (mausoleums and *munara*<sup>16</sup>), the mausoleums of Babiji khatun and Aisha Bibi near Taraz and three towers in the delta of the Syr Darya. All the other monuments are restored buildings or excavated ruins (partially conserved or destroyed). If the Karakitai period doesn't count clearly dated Muslim monuments, some historians attribute Karakhanid monuments to their reign. In this way, Aisha Bibi is considered a Karakitai mausoleum influenced by eastern art<sup>17</sup>.



Fig.3- aerial view of Burana (Balasaghun X-XIV AD) with its minaret and 3 mausoleums bases.

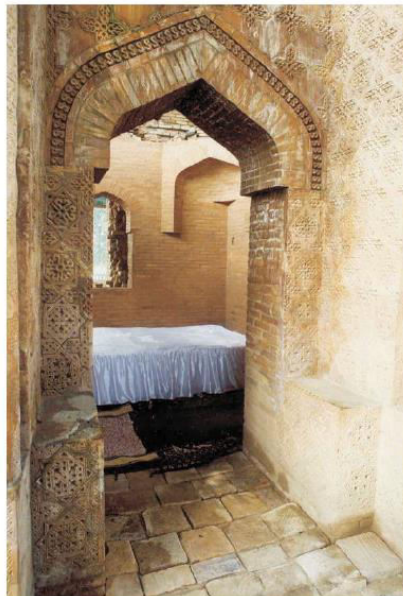


Fig.4- Entrance of the mausoleum of Aisha-Bibi near Taraz (XI-XII AD)

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<sup>16</sup> The word *munara* comes from minaret because it's a tower. It has generally a memorial function like a *mazar* (mausoleum). The toponym Burana comes from its *munara*.

<sup>17</sup> Kevran M., *L'architecture islamique de la conquete arabe aux Mongols*. In : *Les Arts de l'Asie centrale* (dir. P. Chuvain), Paris, 1999, p. 340-341.

Concerning the pre-Samanid period, there are archaeological sites connected with the Arab military occupation of Kazakhstan but they are not direct witnesses of the diffusion of Islam. The earliest monument connected with the presence of the Arabs in Kazakhstan is the fort-palace of Akyrtash located at 40 km east of the city of Taraz, it is a rectangular construction (142 × 169 m) with a fundament in red sandstones made of a dozen of rectangular rooms disseminated around a central square, including two meridional entrances. It probably included a mosque, although no *mihrab* was found in the walls. The building remained unfinished. According to the archaeologists who worked on the site, the architectural planning and the use of huge stones as building material has no similarity in the region and shares similar shape and dimension with the Umayyad castle of Qasr al-Hayr al-Sharqi (167 × 167 m) in East Syria (c. 730 AD) even if the opened *iwan* rooms corresponds to a Persian or Mawarannahr adaptation of this Syrian model<sup>18</sup>. Both authors suppose that this palace was built by the Arabs for their allied Qarluq prince after the battle of Talas in 751 AD.

The other archaeological evidence is the devastation of several important towns in the oases of Otrar and Turkestan during the 8<sup>th</sup> c. and the presence of a layer of burning and crushed material in the surviving towns. The two biggest towns considered to have ceased to exist around the middle of the 8<sup>th</sup> century are Kok Mardan in Otrar and Sidak in Turkestan, both probably constituted local Zoroastrian religious centers because fire temples has been found on the citadel of both sites Archaeologists suppose that the destruction occurred under Arab assaults around 740<sup>19</sup>, even if the historical sources report that, in that year, the governor Nasr b. Sayyar made a pact of non-aggression with Chach under the condition that the rebel al-Harith was sent in exile in Farab.

### 2.1 Islamic monuments built during the Samanid period

Among the earliest archaeological monuments testifying the spread of Islam in South Kazakhstan during the Samanid occupation, the most important are the private mosque of Kulan and the mosque of Taraz.

The private mosque belongs to a palatial complex (a mound of 45 × 40 m made of 25 rooms called Lugovoe G) located in the southeastern *rabad* (*suburb*) of the medieval town of Kulan and dated to the 9<sup>th</sup> century. It was a domed construction with an ornamented ceiling in carved alabaster reclining on a square base made of arched panels dividing the central room with two vaulted vestibules. Both sides of the central room were flanked with an arched

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<sup>18</sup> K. Baipakov, A. Northedge. *La mission franco-kazakhe d'Akyrtash*. In: *Cahiers d'Asie centrale*, 9: *Études karakhmanides* (ed. V. Fourniau), 2001, 265-27. Akyrtash presents also analogies with the fortified palace built one century later in Samarra by the caliph al-Mutasim (833-42) for his Turkic *ghulams*.

<sup>19</sup> N.Smagulov and M.Tuyakbaev argue for a date around 740 on three arguments: the date of the last coins (739) found in Chash (Aktepe near Yunusabad in Tashkent oasis); the fact that the Qarluq and Chash were allied of the Arabs at the battle of Talas in 751, so that their territories were already annexed by the Umayyads; historical accounts like the History of Bukhara of Narshaki reporting (ch. XV, p.60) that when Nasr b. Sayyar came to Mawarannahr he made raids on the Turks, conquering Ferghana and scattering them away. See: Smagulov E., *Arabskoe nashestvie v Yuzhnyi Kazakstan: dannye pis'mennykh i arkhologicheskikh istochnikov* in *Mobilizovanniy arkhologiy* (Ed. by M.K. Khabdulina), Astana, 2004, 109.



alcove. The southeast alcove including the *mihrab* was decorated by representations of the Garden of Eden: Adam and Eva naked and standing at both sides of the tree of life surmounted by a couple of geese under a frontispiece made of Arabic inscriptions in carved plaster. The alcove was bordered by two columns at the foot of which stood the sculpture of a woman crossing her arms over her breast, the traditional features of the Zoroastrian *fravashi* (divine guardian). The opposite niche had the sculptured heads of 4 Turkic or Sogdian rulers and a horseman. Despite the unique aspect of these anthropomorphic sculptures, the architectural planning and the decorative patterns of the building have close similarities with Samanid buildings of South Mawarannahr (estate of the *rabad* of Kyrk-kyz in Termez). It testifies the early syncretism of Islamic and proto-Islamic faiths that are the evidence of a transitional period.

A second, larger mosque dated to that period has been exhumed recently in the western *rabad* of the medieval town of Taraz near the mausoleum of Karakhan. The square building (21 x 21 m) had sixteen flat stones-column bases on its floor and included a sofa and a *mihrab* in its western wall. It was built on a former construction with a cross plan and made of big *pakhsa* blocks. The archaeologist arrived to the conclusion that the ruins correspond to the Nestorian church converted into mosque after the occupation of Taraz in 893 by the Samanid Ismail b. Ahmad<sup>20</sup>. This monument (today a museum) constitutes the earliest sample of an hypostyle public mosque (building resting on rows of columns) with flat roof in Kazakhstan.

Among the other archaeological material dated to that period are the introduction of Samanid architectural decoration and glazed ceramics found in South Kazakhstan. The richest collection of architectural ornaments was found in the medieval town of Kostobe (Sarykemir, 20 km NE of Taraz). This town identified as Jamukat, a Sogdian town built by refugees of Bukhara in the 6<sup>th</sup> century revealed a huge number of plaster decorations similar to those found in the Zeravshan valley (in Afrasyab, Bukhara and Baikend) during the Samanids. The Samanid influence is also testified by beautiful samples of glazed and painted ceramics with lion, peacock, Kufi calligraphy and floral symmetric ornaments found in the layer of 9-10<sup>th</sup> c. of the citadels of Otrar-tobe, Kuyruk-tobe (Otrar oasis) and Taraz<sup>21</sup>.

## 2.2 Islamic monuments built under the Karakhanids

The Islamic monuments testifying the diffusion of Islam during the Karakhanids in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan are represented by around nineteen monuments: seven mausoleums (Burana, Ornek, Taraz), three mosques (Burana, Ornek, Otrar), four minarets and memorial towers (Burana and Syr Darya delta) and five public baths (Aktobe, Taraz, Otrar).

On the site of Burana (10 km at the south of Tokmak in Kyrgyzstan), corresponding to Balasaghun are located one minaret, three mausoleums and one *khanaqa* including a

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<sup>20</sup> Baipakov K., *Raskopki na gorodische Taraz in Madeni Mura*, 2007, 123.

<sup>21</sup> Baipakov K., *Srednevekovaya gorodskaya kultura Yuzhnogo Kazakhstana i Semirech'ya (VI – nachalo XIII vv.)*, 1986, Alma-Ata, 110-184.

mosque. The minaret (9 m diameter base, height 21 m, originally 45), although restored several times, has survived till the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The three mausoleums are located in its vicinity. The first has an octahedral fundament (11 m diameter, height 15-18 m) and a conic roof, the two others (10 x 12 m diameter) had portal structure and a domed or spherical roof. The mosque in the *khanaqa* has an east-west orientation (not towards the *qibla*), with original dimension of 16,5 x 13,2 m and without *mihrab*. It is considered to have constituted the tomb of a Sufi Shaykh (*zyaratkhana*)<sup>22</sup>.

In the medieval town of Aktobe of the Steppes (6<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> c., 50 km south of Chu) oriental baths have been excavated in the citadel. On the site of the medieval village and fort (*tortkul*) of Ornek (70 km east of Taraz) were found a mosque located in the center of the fort and a mausoleum outside its southern wall. The mosque is a long construction (40 x 20 m) oriented north-south from which it conserved eleven big stones in three parallel ranges supposed to support the wooden columns of an hypostyle mosque similar to the synchronous mosque of Kuyuk-tobe (Otrar). Stone columns were found on the site, engraved with anthropomorphic figures that might have used as column of the mosque. The mausoleum (7,5 x 7,5 m) with a flat roof was made of adobes with a floor covered by baked bricks. It was used for collective burials and included five oval sepulchers. Wooden panels lie on the floor, ornated with geometric and vegetal motives<sup>23</sup>.

The medieval town of Taraz has revealed several Muslim buildings. In the northeastern *shahristan* two oriental baths have been excavated. The first (13,4 x 12,4 m) had seven rooms, each with a specific practical function, all decorated with polychromic painted walls and heated by an hypocaust system. The second located not far from the first one was heated the same way but was only partially excavated.

In the western *rabad* of the town, on the site of the Karakhanid necropolis the mausoleum of Karakhan (also Aulie Ata) is still standing. The mausoleum was rebuilt in 1906 and restored in 2001 on the ruins of the 12<sup>th</sup> century original building and consists of a portal-domed type mausoleum (15 x 15 m) made of baked bricks with three rooms in the angles and a central vaulted room with a cross plan.

At 20 km west of Taraz, on the top of a hill overseeing the valley, the mausoleums of Aisha Bibi and Babaji khatun are found. The oldest one (10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> centuries), Babaji khatun (unknown person) is a portal type square building (dimension 7 x 7 m) made of baked bricks with a central vaulted room and a rumbled conic roof (restored in 1979). Aisha Bibi (11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> centuries) is a unique sample of Karakhanid architecture in Central Asia, being a square baked brick building (dimension 9 x 9 m) with a conical roof and with the four facades covered with finely sculpted terra-cotta tiles of geometric and vegetal motives. A legend says that Karakhan (Aulie Ata) had an unlucky love story with a girl, Aisha Bibi who, since she belonged to a Zoroastrian family, was denied to him. The girl, in love, ran away from home to

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<sup>22</sup> Goryacheva V., *À propos de deux capitales du kaghanat karakhanide* in: *Cahiers d'Asie centrale*, 9: *Études karakhanides* (ed. V. Fourniau), 2001, 100-104.

<sup>23</sup> Baipakov K., *Gorodische Ornek* in *Svod Pamyatnikov istoriya i kultury respublika Kazakhstana. Jambylskaya oblast'*, Almaty, 2002, 306-311.

join her beloved but, on the way, died bitten by a snake. Her body was buried here and constitutes an important pilgrimage destination.

In Otrar, in the shahristan of the Karakhanid center of the oasis (Kuyruk-tobe) stood another sample of an early hypostyle mosque (36,5 x 20,5 m), oriented southwest-northeast, with walls combining baked bricks and adobe and 50 column bases in baked bricks supporting wooden columns<sup>24</sup>. In the northern rabad of Otrar-tobe were found two oriental baths. The first one was oriented east-west (11,5 x 16,5 m), had a central cross plan room and four lateral rooms and was heated by an hypocaust system. The second one, very damaged, was only partially excavated.

In the Oghuz towns of the lower Syr Darya are located three memorial towers (*munara*) located at the west and southwest of Jankent (or Yangikent, today south of Kazaly). These towers are all built in adobe covered by baked bricks. Begim-ana has an octagonal plan (6 m diameter base, height 10 m) and was topped by a today flattened cupola. It includes two floors consisting of a brick monolith as lower part and a vaulted room in the upper level. Begim ana is supposed to be the tomb of Shanjara, the wife of Kyzylbashi, the Oghuz ruler of Jankent. Uzun-tam located nearby has a circular plan (7,3 m diameter base, height 10 m, 1,7 m thick walls) with a door facing north-east. Saraman kosa located at 40 km at the south of Yangikent has a circular plan (5 m diameter base, height 15 m, 1 m thick walls) and is made of two floors including two vaulted rooms above each other<sup>25</sup>.

To the Karakhanid period is also attributed the first Muslim tombs consisting in a vaulted room in adobe dug in a pit where the corpse lies without inventory head oriented north-west and face towards the south. Such burials have been excavated in the necropolis of Kuyruk-tobe (Otrar, 10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> centuries) and in the Chu valley in the necropolis of Burana (11<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> centuries).

A large quantity of glazed ceramics and metal objects (oil lamps, chandelier, jugs) bearing Arabic calligraphy with religious dedication have been found in several towns of Southern Kazakhstan.<sup>26</sup>

### 3. Literary (hagiographical) evidences of the process of Islamization

The hagiographical and genealogical histories of the Khwaja communities of the Syr Darya valley and Karatau piedmonts are a major source of information concerning the

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<sup>24</sup> Among the early hypostyle mosques of Central Asia, the mosques of Ornek and Kuyruk-tobe have a similar planning with the ruins of the "namazgah" mosque of Sapol-tepa (medieval town of Barangi, near Shurchi, 35 km of Denau) built in the 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> in the Surkhandarya region in Uzbekistan. See : Baipakov, K., *Culture urbaine du Kazakhstan du sud et du Semiretchie à l'époque des Karakhanides* in *Cahiers d'Asie centrale*, 9 : *Études karakhanides* (ed. V. Fourniau), 2001, 167-175 and Rtveladze E.V., Arshavskaya Z. A., Abdullaev K.A. *Drevneishaya mnogokolonnaya mechet' Srednei Azii. Stroitelstvo I arkhitektura v Uzbekistane*, 6, Tashkent, 1979, 34-36.

<sup>25</sup> Baitenov E., *Munara Begim-ana; Bashnya Uzun-tam; Bashnya (Munara Saraman-kosa)* in *Svod Pamyatnikov istoriya i kultury respublika Kazakhstana. Kyzylordinskaya oblast'*, Almaty, 2007, 263-64, 276-77, 281-82.

<sup>26</sup> Baipakov K., *Srednevekovye goroda Kazakhstana na Velikom Shelkovom puti*, Almaty, 1998, 37-38.

diffusion of Islam in Central Asia and Kazakhstan. These “sacred histories”<sup>27</sup> have been collected and studied during the last twenty years and have revealed historical names, events and toponyms sometimes confirming the historical sources. The hagiographies, called ‘*nasab nama*’ (“book of the generations” or “of the lineage”), were written down by Khwaja groups<sup>28</sup> with the aim of testifying their privileged religious ascendancy and economical rights. The oldest and main history from which most of the later works borrow information is the last part, entitled “*Hadiqat al-arifin*”, of the *Risalah* (Treatise) of Shaykh Khwaja Ishaq written down during the middle 14<sup>th</sup> century including the nasab namas of Ishaq Bab, Ahmad Yasavi and Ismail Ata.<sup>29</sup>

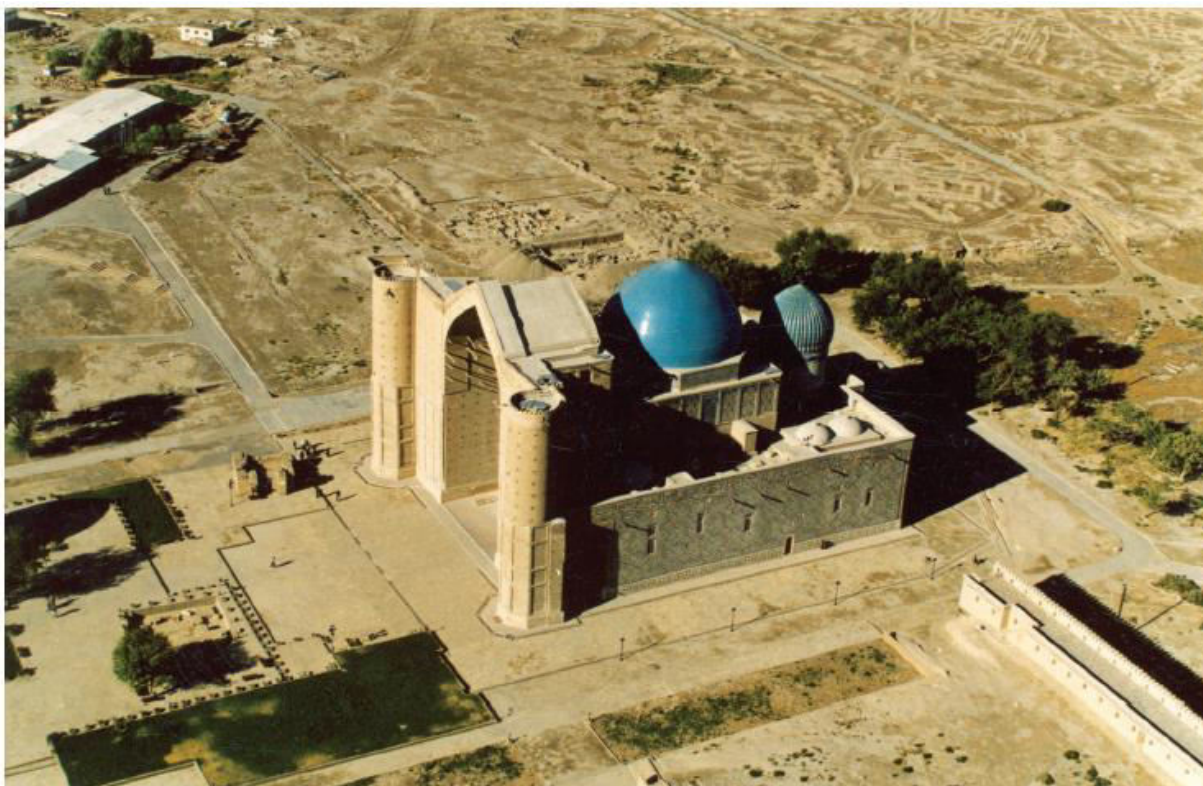


Fig.5- aerial view of the mausoleum of Ahmed Yasawi in Turkestan (XIV-XV AD)

<sup>27</sup> DeWeese D., *Yasavian legends on the Islamization of Turkistan*. In: D. Sinor (dir.), *Aspects of Altaic Civilization III*, Research Institute for Inner Asian Studies, Indiana University Uralic and Altaic Series, Bloomington, vol. 145, p. 2.

<sup>28</sup> Classified in seventeen groups according to their ancestors (from Akkurgan, Khorassan, Karakhanid...). See: *Islamization and Sacred Lineages in Central Asia: the Legacy of Ishaq Bab in Narrative and Genealogical Traditions*, vol.2, Almaty-Bern-Tashkent-Bloomington, 2008, 43.

<sup>29</sup> The numerous versions of the nasab-namas (Ashirbek Muminov has collected 37 different versions at the present moment) ascribed to dates starting from the 13<sup>th</sup> century but written down during the 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> centuries have been recently divided in seven types of redaction according to seven most complete versions: 1) the nasab-nama of the “*Hadiqat al-arifin*”, 2) the nasab-nama of the redaction Kara-Asman, 3) the nasab-nama-ii manzuma of Abd’al Aziz ibn Katta khwaja, 4) the Vasiyat-nama-ii Maulana Safi ad-din Urung-kulaki, 5) the Tardjuma-ii Nasab-nama, 6) the nasab-nama of the Arkuk redaction, 7-the Tarikh-nama of the Kayalik redaction. The versions (3) and (5) are in Persian, the other versions are in Turkic. See: Muminov A., *O sakral’noi istorii “nasab-nameh” in Almaty. Istoriya tysyacheletiya*, v.1, Almaty, 2008, 115-121.

According to these sacred histories the Khwaja groups are descendant of the grandson of the prophet Muhammad, Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiya, descendants of a trio who spread militarily Islam in the region, descendants of the founders and rulers of the Karakhanid dynasty and descendants of Ahmad Yasavi, his relatives (brother, sister, daughter according to the version) and disciples (Ismail Ata).

These stories position the beginning of the diffusion of Islam in South Kazakhstan one and a half century after the Hegira by the three heroes: Ishaq Bab, his brother Abd al-Jalil Bab and his uncle Abd ar-Rahim Bab, who belonged to a royal family in Syria. Ishaq asked his uncle to avenge the Muslims who had been previously martyred in Central Asia by Christians (*Tarsa*) and Magians (*Mugh*). All agree to move with armies to Ferghana and Chach<sup>30</sup> where they started to spread Islam through the sword. From Chach they divided in three: the uncle went to Jetikend (Uzgend and further east till Kashgar), Ishaq Bab to Isfijab and Abd al-Jalil to Barchkent in the lower Syr Darya. Abd ar-Rahim defeated the Christian king of Kashgar, Mynkozluk Karakhan, ruled thirty years and further diffused Islam in Almalyk (Ili) and Kayalyk (Northeastern Semirech'e) then took the name of Kilich Karakhan in Kuzbalyk<sup>31</sup> (another name of Balasaghun). His son settled in Saryg (medieval town near Bishkek), his grandson Aulie Khan settled in Otrar, his grand grandson Mansur Khamir<sup>32</sup> in Sairam and the next generations ruled in Otrar until the last governor of Otrar Kair khan who got besieged by "the oppressor" (Gengis Khan).

Ishaq Bab defeated Sawalkhan, the Christian king of Sairam, with the help of his standard bearer, Abd al-Aziz, who died as a hero and further settled in Karghalyk (possibly Baba Ata on the eastern piedmonts of the Karatau) where he converted Christians and Magians.

His brother, Abd al-Jalil Bab went to Barchkent where he fought against the Christian population and their rulers, Qilich Khan and his son Sarig Tonluq Otemish Khan, the king of Jend. Abd al-Jalil died in the battle but Ishaq Bab came to avenge him and took the ruler and his king back in captivity in Karghalyk where he finally executed them. After that he went on pilgrimage to Mecca and came back in Sairam where he built a wooden mosque.

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<sup>30</sup> Chash is the first "Turkic" land to convert to Islam and the Muslims *ghazis* of Ferghana formed the bulk of the army of Satuq Bughra Khan when he besieged Kashgar as recorded in the accounts of Jamal Qarshi's *Mulhaqat as-Surah*.

<sup>31</sup> In another nasab nama, Satuq is said to have 3 sons, Shah Ahmad (Shamy khan), ruler in Kashgar, Shah Ahmed (Shamsi khan in Jetikend and Hasan who ruled in Kuzbalyk. The three of them constituted the triple rule of the Karakhanids.

<sup>32</sup> Mansur Khamir, son of Aulie karakhan (saint of Taraz), is one of the main saints of Sayram who ruled at the time of Ismail Samani, ruler of Samarkand according to a 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> c. "Sacred history of Sayram". If in the nasab namas he is the father of Chaghir Tegin, in the sacred history of Sairam, he is his second successor after the reign of Arslan Khan. See Devin DeWeese, *Sacred History of a Central Asian town. Saints, Shrines, and Legends of Origin in Histories of Sayrām, 18th-19th Centuries* in: *Revue des mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée*, 89-90, July 2000, p. 245-295.



Fig.6- mausoleum of Adbal-Aziz Bab in Sairam

The next hagiographies are those of Ahmad Yasavi and Ismail Ata but consist mainly in a genealogical list of names. The life of Ahmad Yasavi is well known through other nasab namas, hagiographies<sup>33</sup> and verses from his *“Diwan-i-Khikmet”*. Compiling the information provided by these different sources we get to know that Ahmad Yasavi is a 12<sup>th</sup> (or 10<sup>th</sup> according to other versions) descendant of Ishaq Bab through his grandfather Mahmud. His father Ibrahim was a shaykh in Sairam and had two children, Ahmad and Sadr Shaykh<sup>34</sup>. First educated by his father till the age of seven when he became orphan, Ahmad continued his instruction under Arslan Bab who was charged by the prophet to give him a date.

Arslan Bab is described as a miraculous man who was two and half meter tall and who lived 400 years<sup>35</sup>. Under his advices, Ahmad went at 27 to Bukhara to receive

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<sup>33</sup> The *Javahir al-abrar*(16<sup>th</sup> c.), *Lamahat min nahafat al-Quds* (17<sup>th</sup> c), *Tufhat al ansab-i Alavi*( 18<sup>th</sup> c). See: Devin DeWeese, *The Politics of Sacred Lineages in 19<sup>th</sup>-century Central Asia: Descent groups linked to Khwaja Ahmad Yasavi in shrine documents and Genealogical charters in International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 31, 1999, p.512-15.

<sup>34</sup> According to some hagiographies, he didn't have a brother but a sister called Gaukhar Shahnaz. His brother, Sadr Shaykh, had a son called Danishmand Urung Kuilaki whose son was Safi al-Din (Urung-Kuilaki) to whom is attributed one of the redactions of the nasab-nama (dated to 1291). The two different familial lineages, through Yasavi's brother and through his sister, represent to two opposite Khwaja groups who fought during the 19<sup>th</sup> century (most probably from the occupation of the region by the Kokand khanate in 1840 onward) for the management of the economical, political and religious rights of Yasavi's shrine and endowments.

<sup>35</sup> According to the introduction and commentaries to the Khwaja Ahmad Yasavi, *Khikmety*,(ed. M.Abuseitova) Almaty, 2000, c. by Z. Jandarbek, Arslan Bab was the leader in Otrar of the Mubayyidites and he knew thirty-three religious doctrines. In the popular Islam of Kazakhstan, he figures as one of the main ancestors of the Kazakh *bakhsy*. See: Mustafina R.M. *Predstavleniya, kulty, obriady u Kazakhov*, Alma-Ata, 1992, c. 71, 103-107. Arslan Bab is also the ancestor of a Khwaja lineage according to which he shared a grandfather with Ahmad Yasavi and to which belonged the first successors of his *tariqa* (Sufi order) Mansur Ata, Taj Khwaja, Zangi Baba

instructions under the Sufi Shayk Yusuf Hamadani. Later, he left his companions to the care of the great Shaykh Khwaja Abd al-Khaliq Ghujuwani and came to Yasi to lecture exoteric and esoteric Islamic teachings. At the age of 63, he built his crypt in the necropolis of the town and remained there 62 (or 125) years passing his wisdoms to his disciples (compiled by them under his name as the “*Diwan-i-Khikmet*”).

The hagiography of Ismail Ata makes him a 13<sup>th</sup> generation descendant of Abd al-Jalil Bab through his grandfather Suksuk Ata who was a student of Danishmand Urung Kulaki, himself a disciple and nephew of Ahmad Yasavi. The hagiographer, Shaykh Khwaja Ishaq (c.1350), was the son of Ismail Ata al-Kazgurti who has his mausoleum (14<sup>th</sup> c.) in the village of Turbat between Shimkent and Tashkent in Kazakhstan. Other sacred histories reveal many information about Ismail Ata, his relatives and disciples but it is beyond the chronological scope of this paper to analyze them.

Concerning the historicity of these Khwaja hagiographies, it is evident that they put in one chronological sequence anachronistic dates and events belonging to different phases of the historical Islamization: the start is made one hundred and fifty years after the hegira (in some versions one hundred years), so initiated by the second half of the 8<sup>th</sup> century under the leading of three heroes among whom Abd ar-Rahim figures as Satuq Boghra khan, the first Karakhanid ruler and father of Musa Boghra khan who brought 200,000 Turkic yurts to Islam declaring it dynastical religion in 960<sup>36</sup>, so two centuries later than the narrated start of the Islamization. It seems that these stories of the Islamization have contracted the three early phases of Islamization in one generation declared to have lived around 750 but receiving at the same time an historical root and a coherent genealogical succession with the Muslim conversion of the Karakhanids.

The three periods are the ones presented here above: Pre-Samanid, Samanid and Karakhanid. The historicity of the Pre-Samanid events of the nasab-namas has been supported by A. Muminov who associates Ishaq Bab with Ishaq at-Turk of the Persian source<sup>37</sup>, linking the early spread of Islam in Ferghana, Chach, Kashgar and South Kazakhstan with the Muslimiyya movements after 755. In this sense, he considers the early ancestors of the Khwajas as Mubbayyidite communities<sup>38</sup>. The hagiographies conserve also historical names belonging to the Samanid period; Bakr ad-Din Qaffal, the *tabi'in* in Ishaq Bab's army who settled in Chach corresponds to the Shafi jurist Abu Bakr Qaffal Shashi who lived in the 10<sup>th</sup> century and still have a mausoleum near Tashkent<sup>39</sup> and Mansur Khamir could be Mansur (d. 951) the son of Kara Tegin (d. 930), commander of the Khorasan army of Nuh b. Nasr (943-953) who is buried with his father in the “Kara Tegin palace” in Sairam as recorded by al-Makdisi and al-Athir<sup>40</sup>. But Mansur could also be a Karakhanid leader because with the

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and Mulla Musa Ibn Isa Khwaja Sairami, a 19<sup>th</sup> c. historian of Kashgar. See: Devin DeWeese, *The Politics of...op.cit*, 526..

<sup>36</sup> Ibn al-Athir, *Al-Kamil Fit tariq* translated in Russian by P.G. Bulgakova, Tashkent, 2005, p.138

<sup>37</sup> Ibn al-Nadim, *Fihrist* (10<sup>th</sup> c) referred by Daftary F., *Sectarian...op.cit*, 49.

<sup>38</sup> Muminov A., *O sakral'noi istorii...op.cit*, c.119.

<sup>39</sup> DeWeese D., *Yasavian...op.cit*, 13.

<sup>40</sup> Ibn al-Athir, *Al-Kamil Fit tariq* translated in Russian by P.G. Bulgakova, Tashkent, 2005, 104 and 131

Karakhanids, the events and the ruler's succession start to match historical sources. If we follow Abd ar-Rahim Satuq Boghra khan's successive rulers in Chu, Taraz, Sairam and Otrar, we find historically attested leaders. Even if Karakhanid rulers bearing the name of Mansur and Chaghri Tegin are numerous<sup>41</sup>, we find the governor of Otrar Bilge khan well attested in the Karakhanid coins minted in Otrar as Hasan b. al-Khaliq and in the historical sources as having been executed by the Khorezm shah b. Tekish in 1217<sup>42</sup> and his successor, the Kangli tribesman Kair Khan was Inalchuq Kair Khan who got besieged by the armies of Gengis khan in 1219<sup>43</sup>.

By making Ahmad Yasavi a disciple of Yusuf al-Hamadani (d. 1140), the nasab-namas confirm the date generally accepted for his death around 1167. But other hagiographies of the 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> centuries make him also a contemporaneous of the Mongol invasion and of the lives of Sufi Shaykhs like al-Ghujuwani (d. 1220) and Najm al-Din Kubra (d. 1221). He is therefore considered to have lived between the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>44</sup>

The nasab-namas conceal other important information concerning the early Islamization of the Turks such as the names of the two sons of the forerunner *imam* Muhammad al-Hanafiya, Abd al-Mannan and Abd al-Fattah. These names are not found in any historical sources and A.Muminov have proposed that Abd al-Fattah could be Fatak (Patek) the father of Mani (216-274) and al-Mannan, a name coming from "al-Mananiya" the Muslim appellation of Manichaeism on the basis that Manichaeism was one of the main religions supported by the Turks till the 9<sup>th</sup> century as testified by several historical, epigraphic and archaeological data.<sup>45</sup>

## Conclusions

In the view of the all the information presented here above (historical, archaeological, hagiographical), we have now a consistent picture. During the Umayyads, Farab (Otrar) gave refuge to the Kharijite movement's leader al-Harith b. Surayj while the Turgesh and Qarluqs supported the Abbasid uprising led by Abu-Muslim and, after his death, the Mubbayyidite

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<sup>41</sup> We can isolate two names closely related to the territory of present-day Kazakhstan: Mansur Muhammad b. Husein Isfijabi who in 998 revolted against the Samanid Mansur b. Nuh requesting military assistance from the Karakhanid Nasr b. Ali and Husein b. Muhammad Chaghri Tegin who ruled over Taraz and Isfijab before being conquered by Ibrahim Tamghach khan (1040-1069). About Mansur Isfijabi see: E. Bosworth, *Asfijab* in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, II, 1987, 749-750. About Chaghri Tegin, Ibn al-Athir *op.cit*, 186.

<sup>42</sup> Among the coins minted in Otrar between 1174 and 1210 and found in Otrar, Taraz and Kermina near Bukhara figure the rulers Abd al-Khaliq and his son (not his father as enlisted by the nasab-nama) Bilge khakan Hasan. See: Baipakov, K., *Culture urbaine du Kazakhstan du sud et du Semiretchie à l'époque des Karakhanides* in *Cahiers d'Asie centrale*, 9 : *Études karakhanides* (ed. V. Fourniau), 2001, 167-175. Taj ad-Din Bilge khan ruled till 1215 according to Nasawi, *Histoire du Sultan Djelal ed-Din Mankobirti, prince du Kharezm* (ed.& transl. By O.Houdas), Paris, 1891-95, vol.2 (transl.) 38-41

<sup>43</sup> Well known history of the fall of Otrar recorded by Nasawi and Juvayni (13<sup>th</sup> c).

<sup>44</sup> DeWeese D., *Ahmad Yasavi in Islam na territorii bioshei Rossiiskoi imperii*, vol. 4, Moskva, 2003.

<sup>45</sup> Muminov A., *O sakral'noi istorii...op.cit*, 120. On Manichaeism among the Turks, see above part 2 and Zuev Y., *Rannie Tyurki: ocherki istorii i ideologii*, Almaty, 2002, 179-256.



revolt of Ishaq at-Turk and al-Muqanna. Around the time of the battle of Talas, the outskirts of Taraz received one of the earliest samples of a *ribat* (fortified outpost) in the form of the palace of Akyrtash, sharing similar planning with a contemporary Syrian castle. The nasab names ascribe to this period the first phase of Islamization, emphasizing the Syrian and military link through the heroic fights of Ishaq Bab and his relatives against the local Christian and Zoroastrian Turkic kings. These events were possibly accompanied by the first conversions among the population of the region to a heterodox form of Islam blending Zoroastrian and Islamic rituals with Manichaean elements. With the Samanid expansion towards the north Syr Darya, South Kazakhstan entered at the service of the Central Asian and caliphal courts through the supply of soldiers and powerful Turkic generals like Kara Tegin and Mansur Isfijabi and preeminent intellectuals like al-Farabi (878-950). At that time, the Turko-Sogdian towns entered the realm of the *Dar-al-Islam* by building mosques and *hamams* (baths) even if they kept their religious tolerance as attested by the private mosque of Kulan where the figures of Adam and Eva sided by Zoroastrian angels are standing inside the *mihrab*.

At the eve of the Karakhanids, many Oghuz tribes of the Syr Darya valley converted to Islam and the Turkic aristocratic groups exiled in the eastern Tianshan claimed Islam as their dynastical religion, probably under the advices of the forefathers of the Khwaja communities. Masters of Central Asia and at the center of the Eurasian trade of silver and gold deficient in the West, the Karakhanids developed a sophisticated urban culture, providing the earliest works of Turkic literature (written by al-Kashgari and al-Balasaghuni) and unique samples of architecture like the mausoleum of Aisha Bibi, dedicated to the unlucky love of a Zoroastrian girl with a Turkic Muslim prince. With the socio-political crisis initiated under the Karakitai, the Turks of present-day southern Kazakhstan became more sensible to soteriological messages, when Sufi masters such as Ahmad Yasavi became new counterparts of their shamans and epic singers.