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(1926–2015)*

*Werner Sundermann  
(1935–2012)*

*Iradj Afshar  
(1925–2011)*

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# The Coming of the Mongols

## *The Idea of Iran*

### Volume VII

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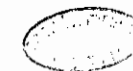
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## Scholarship and Science under the Qara Khitai (1124–1218)

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One of the distinctive features of the history of Greater Iran in the period between the Seljuqs to the Mongols was the establishment of the Qara Khitai, or Western Liao Empire, in Central Asia. This unique polity, established by Manchurian nomads who were expelled to Central Asia from north China, managed to govern the mostly Muslim population of Central Asia in rare harmony, despite the ‘infidelity’ of its rulers. In many ways, it had been a – rather benign – prelude to the coming of the Mongols into the Islamic world. Moreover, the relative stability and prosperity that the Qara Khitai brought to Central Asia enabled the flourishing of Islamic and non-religious scholarship under their reign.<sup>2</sup>

This chapter seeks to shed some light on Muslim intellectual activities under Qara Khitai rule. Based on a variety of Muslim and Chinese literary sources as well as archaeological evidence, and following the careers of twelfth- and thirteenth-century scholars, including migrants from the Qara Khitai realm who were active under Mongol rule, it reconstructs the main fields of knowledge and achievements of Central Asian Muslim scholars under the Qara Khitai and their impact on the later Islamic world, including Iran.

### *Background: The Qara Khitai*

The Kitans, a nomadic people of Manchurian provenance, arrived in Central Asia after more than 200 years of ruling – in Manchuria, Mongolia and parts of north China – as the Liao dynasty (907–1125). In north China the Kitans both maintained their native traditions – such as a nomadic way of life, the Kitan language, and shamanic rituals – and embraced the Chinese imperial tradition, including such of its trappings as reign titles, the calendar, and the Chinese language, which they used alongside Kitan and Turkic. Other major transformations of the Liao period were the invention of two Kitan scripts, large and small; intensive urbanisation, which did not prevent the Kitans from maintaining their nomadic lifestyle (the royal court’s seasonal movements continued throughout the Liao period); patronage of Buddhist institutions to enhance the Kitans’ legitimacy; the modification of their burial customs; and

the emergence of a unique and sophisticated material culture that revolved around gold.

The Liao Kitans also set up a dual administration, in which the southern branch was responsible for administrating the sedentary population and the northern branch for the nomadic sector. They managed to force the contemporaneous Han Chinese dynasty, the Song (960–1279) to acknowledge them as equal. Thus, the Liao and Song emperors both bore the title 'Son of Heaven' (the Liao emperor as the northern one and his Song counterpart as the southern), in contrast to the traditional Chinese worldview, according to which there is one sun in the sky and one emperor upon earth. Consequently, while preserving much of their original Kitan characteristics and nomadic political culture, the Kitans also managed to portray themselves both inside and outside their realm as no less Chinese than the Song. In fact the word Cathay/Kitad, which derived from the ethnic affiliation (Kitan/Khitai) of the Liao's rulers, became the term for China not only in Mongolia but further west – in medieval Europe, Russia, and the Muslim world. The Liao conducted trade relations with the peoples of Islamic Central Asia, especially the Qarakhanids, with whom they also had marital connections.<sup>3</sup>

In the early twelfth century, when the Liao was overthrown by another wave of Manchurian invaders, the Jurchens, one Khitai prince, Yelü Dashi, chose not to submit to the new rulers. Instead he led his few adherents westwards, hoping to return subsequently and restore the Liao in its former domains. In a little more than a decade he succeeded in setting up a new empire in Central Asia that was known there as the Qara Khitai, and in China as the Western Liao (Xi Liao). The dynasty persisted for nearly 90 years, and was finally vanquished by the Mongols in 1218.

At its height, after defeating the Seljuq Sultan Sanjar in the famous Battle of Qatwān near Samarqand (1141), the Qara Khitai Empire stretched from the Oxus River in western Uzbekistan to the Altai Mountains on the Chinese–Mongolian border. Until 1175, the state's borders ran even further east into the Naiman and Yenisei Qirghiz territories on the fringes of western Mongolia. The population of this vast empire was multi-ethnic and heterogeneous. Besides the Kitans, who constituted but a small minority in their own domain, there were Turks (Uighurs included), Iranians, Mongols, and a few Han Chinese. While most of the populace was sedentary and Muslim, there was an appreciable nomadic component (led by the Kitans themselves), as well as flourishing Buddhist, Nestorian, and even Jewish communities.<sup>4</sup>

In Central Asia the Kitans continued to adhere to Liao-Chinese trappings (languages, symbols of rulership and vassalage) and to Kitan identity markers. In fact, recent philological research and archaeological discoveries suggest that the Kitan character of the Qara Khitai was more pronounced than was previously thought: thus, for example, while the dynasty's name was understood until recently to mean Black Khitai (*Qara* meaning black in Mongolian and Turkic),

Daniel Kane has shown, on the basis of the newly found Kitan inscriptions, that the Mongolian term *\*hara-kida* was actually a version of the Kitan *\*xuri(s) kida(n)*, the Chinese equivalent of which is the Liao Kitans. This was the name by which the Kitans called themselves on the eve of the Jurchen conquest. This implies that the Liao dynasty in China and Yelü Dashi's state in Central Asia were known by the same name (as reflected in the way in which *The Secret History of the Mongols* and Rashid al-Din treat the two polities).<sup>5</sup> As for archaeology, recent artefacts unearthed in Central Asia attest to the preservation of elements of Kitan material culture, script, and perhaps also historical writing under the Qara Khitai.<sup>6</sup>

Despite these similarities, and due to the impact of the new Central Asian environment, Qara Khitai rule was very different from that of the Liao. First of all, it was far less direct and centralised. Apart from its central territory, most of the Qara Khitai realm was administrated indirectly and in a rather minimalistic way: the local dynasties – most important among them were the Eastern and Western Qarakhanids and the Gaochang Uighurs – remained mainly intact, usually retaining their rulers, titles and armies, and no permanent Qara Khitai troops were stationed in the subject territories. Liao peculiarities such as the dual administration or the five capitals were not retained, and despite the use of Chinese titles, no Chinese bureaucracy existed under the Western Liao. Instead, in a typical Inner Asian amalgamation, the Qara Khitai administration also included Turkic and Persian elements, manifested, for example, in the use of the Persian and Turkic languages in addition to Chinese and Kitan, and in the prevalence of Turkic and Persian titles among the dynasty's prominent titles, such as *tayangyu* (Turkic: 'chamberlain') and *shihna* (Persian: 'local governor'). Even the ruler's title, *Gürkhan* ('universal khan'), was a hybrid Kitan–Turkic title.<sup>7</sup> Despite these influences, however, and in sharp contrast to their predecessors and successors in Central Asia, throughout their rule the Qara Khitai did not embrace Islam, the dominant religion in their new environment. Instead, they constructed their identity and legitimacy upon a unique combination of a shared nomadic political tradition and the prestige of China in Muslim Central Asia.<sup>8</sup>

Despite the retention of their 'Kitanness' and 'infidelity', the Qara Khitai's shrewd use of their Chinese and nomadic cultural capital, the relative prosperity and stability that they brought to Central Asia, their religious tolerance, and their mainly indirect style of rule, enabled the empire to govern its diverse population effectively, up to the rise of Chinggis Khan.

Until the deterioration of Qara Khitai rule in the early thirteenth century, local Muslim scholars were quite sympathetic towards the infidel rulers.<sup>9</sup> At least two Hanafite scholars even concluded that under the Qara Khitai, Central Asia (or at least Transoxania and Farghana) had remained 'the abode of Islam', as the region did not border the abode of war, and the infidels did not enforce their laws, instead retaining Muslim judges and rulers, and employing Muslim

officials. One of them, Abu Qasim Muhammad b. Yusuf al-Samaqandi (d. 1161) mentioned also that Muslim rulers subject to the infidels were not to be blamed if they had to carry the infidels' tablet of authority (*baiza* from Chinese *paizi*) and don their dress (black clothes and a tall pointed headgear [*sarāghuj*]). These items, explains al-Samaqandi, were merely symbols of authority, and had nothing to do with religion.<sup>10</sup> The second scholar, Abu Bakr al-Marghinani (d. after 1253), even blessed the infidels, saying: 'May God give them what will make them fortunate in this world and in the next (*atāhum Allāh mā yus'iduhum bihi fī al-dārayn*)'.<sup>11</sup> This striking positive attitude towards non-Muslim rulers is probably related to the vigorous flourishing of Muslim intellectual activities under Qara Khitai rule.

I will review, first, Islamic scholarship, and then the non-religious sciences. The scarcity of relevant documentation – both literary and archaeological – suggests that this picture will be far from complete, but the vitality of the intellectual life in this period will hopefully be manifested.

### *Islamic Scholarship*

Qara Khitai rule did not limit the expansion of Islam. On the contrary, the large size of the empire and the relative peace within it facilitated further Muslim infiltration into Inner Asia. Thus, for example, under the Qara Khitai, Islam prevailed for the first time in the regions of Qayaliq (south Kazakhstan) and Almaliq (northwest Xinjiang, China), where the Qarluq rulers embraced it before the early thirteenth century. Many Muslims existed among the Uighurs, and Muslim merchants reached all the way to Mongolia and North China.<sup>12</sup>

Islamic scholarship flourished under the Qara Khitai even in their capital, Balasaghun; in cities of eastern Turkestan such as Kashgar and Khotan – the latter allegedly having more than 3,000 illustrious *imāms* in the early thirteenth century;<sup>13</sup> and, most of all, in the much better-documented Transoxania and Farghana, where local Muslim rulers and officials served as its main patrons.

Al-Sam'ani (d. 1166), Fakhr al-Din Razi (d. 1206) and 'Awfi (d. 1232), all of whom were scholars who spent at least several years in Qara Khitai's Transoxania in the second half of the twelfth century, give first-hand evidence of the vigour of Muslim scholarship in this period – a fact attested also by contemporaneous tomb inscriptions.<sup>14</sup> While religious scholarship included prophetic traditions (*Hadīth*) and Qur'anic studies, Arabic grammar, literature, genealogy, theology and philosophy,<sup>15</sup> the main strength of Central Asian scholarship remained Hanafi law. A central place in the scholarly community and its networks of patronage was played by the Burhan family, also known as Banu Maza – leading Hanafi jurists who held the position of *sadr* (eminent person, local leader). They became the Gürkhan's officials, and as such were responsible for collecting his taxes from Bukhara. The sources' claims that they were patrons of 4,000 or 6,000 jurist scholars may be exaggerated, but 'Awfi's first-hand descriptions of the many scholars who enjoyed Burhanid patronage (himself included) leave no doubt

regarding the important position they held among Bukhara's scholarly community. The fame of the Burhan family – both scholarly and political – was also known outside Transoxania, as attested by the reception of the Burhanid *sadr* in Baghdad in 1206, when he led the pilgrims of Khurasan.<sup>16</sup> Even into the late thirteenth century, scholars from both Central Asia and further westwards – from Iran to Syria – were proud to mention that they had studied with the *sadrs*.<sup>17</sup>

While the Burhanid position was indeed exceptional, the local 'ulama' continued to enjoy both scholarly and social prestige: nearly every town in Central Asia had its own Sheikh al-Islam, or leading scholar, who enjoyed great respect, while even lesser scholars had considerable retinues of students and followers, estimated at several hundred persons.<sup>18</sup> Public discussion of legal, theological and philosophical issues was quite common, and attracted large crowds.<sup>19</sup> Study was practised in colleges (*madaris*), mosques and private houses, where study sessions (*majalis*) took place often within a certain circle (*halqa*) of scholars. Major scholarly centres included Bukhara, Samarqand and Nasaf, but many scholars were of rural background, originating in the various villages around these cities.<sup>20</sup>

Closely connected to the Transoxanian community was the Muslim centre of Farghana, which in the Qara Khitai period produced prominent Hanafi legal scholars such as Qadi Khan (d. 1196) and al-Marghinani (d. 1197), the compiler of the celebrated *Hidaya* and student of the Burhanid *sadrs*, whose son's sympathetic attitude to the infidel rulers was cited above.<sup>21</sup> Late twelfth- and early thirteenth-century inscriptions from Uzgand and Safid Bulana (near Awsh in Farghana), as well as 'Awfi's descriptions, attest that the towns had flourishing Islamic communities.<sup>22</sup> The religious scholars remained leaders of the local population, mediating between the city dwellers and local rulers or occasional invaders, while quite a few held administrative posts in the Qarakhanid (and sometimes also the Qara Khitai) government, and later also in Chaghadai's court.<sup>23</sup>

The Qara Khitai realm remained connected to other centres in the Muslim world through pilgrimage and travels in search of knowledge, and attracted a considerable amount of students from outside. Especially close connections existed with Khurasan, but western Iran and Iraq – and even India and Syria – were also among the places visited by Central Asian scholars, and from which people came to study in Central Asia. Yet the Transoxanian scholars often looked down on other centres of knowledge (Iraq and Khurasan) – a fact that infuriated Fakhr al-Din al-Razi.<sup>24</sup>

Professor Shahab Ahmad, who, based on a unique bibliography compiled by a certain Mahmud Faryabi in mid- to late twelfth-century Bukhara, analysed the intellectual horizons of the Bukharan scholarly community of that time, concluded that the intellectual tradition there was mainly regional. He stressed the central position of Khurasanian and Transoxanian works in the bibliography available for Bukharan scholars (61 out of the 76 identified books in the bibliography originated in these centres, nine other works originated in western Iran, and

there was one each from Baghdad, Mosul, Damascus and Egypt). This division ignores the political boundaries between Transoxania and Khurasan, but creates a discernible northeastern regional tradition.<sup>25</sup> Some of the works produced in Qara Khitai Transoxania continued to be part of the Iranian and Central Asian curriculum up to the Timurid period.<sup>26</sup> With the Mongol whirlwind, however, as many scholars escaped from the incoming troops of Chinggis Khan or the later upheavals in the Chaghadaid realm, refugees and migrants disseminated their regional traditions throughout the Muslim world. Thus Qadi Khan, al-Marghinani, the Burhan family – and even their best students, such as Shams al-A'ima' al-Kardari (d. 1246 in Bukhara) – continued to be studied and appreciated in Iran, Iraq, Egypt, Syria, and even India and China.<sup>27</sup> The regional Transoxanian–Khurasanid tradition therefore became much more widespread and relevant in large areas of the Muslim world.

The same phenomenon is attested regarding Sufi activities: Sufis, some of them also renowned 'ulama', were quite active in the Qara Khitai realm, although we know very little about their whereabouts.<sup>28</sup> The centres of Sufism were on the fringes of the Qara Khitai realm, in Khwarazm, where the leading figure was Najm al-Din Kubra (d. 1220 during the Mongol onslaught) and Balkh, the dwelling place of Baha' al-Din Walad, father of Jalal al-Din Rumi. Again, after the Mongol invasion, while a considerable Sufi community remained in Central Asia – leading to the conversion of, among others, Berke Khan (r. 1257–67), the first Mongol prince to adopt Islam – many of the eminent Sufi disciples migrated westwards and southwards, where they had a memorable impact on the later development of Islamic mysticism. Kubrawi disciples settled not only in Bukhara, but also in India, where they established the local branch known as the Firdawsiyya, and in Khurasan. From there the order expanded to Iran, where major figures such as 'Ala' al-Din Simnani (d. 1336) and the Sheikh Ibrahim b. Hamuya (d. 1322), who converted Ilkhan Ghazan (r. 1295–1304), were active later in the Ilkhanate. Baha al-Din Walad migrated to Konia, where Jalal al-Din Rumi (1207–73) became a leading figure. The father of Nizam al-Din Awliya (1243–1345), the founder of the Indian Chishti order, was a Bukharan Sufi who left Transoxania for Delhi on the eve of Chinggis Khan's invasion.<sup>29</sup>

### *Sciences: Non-Religious Scholarship*

Non-religious scholarship also flourished in Qara Khitai Central Asia, and was often practised by the same people, as many religious scholars were polymaths, specialising also in various kinds of sciences. A good example is the physician of the Qara Khitai court, the judge (*qadi*) Shams al-Din Mansur b. Mas'ud al-Uzgandi, who was also well versed in astronomy, a notable poet, and a military commander. It is no wonder that, when he offered his services to the Qara Khitai, they were glad to hire him, and he became a close companion of the rulers and their officials.<sup>30</sup>

Scientists were in high demand in the eastern Islamic world: Nizami-yi 'Arudi Samarqandi, a contemporary of the Qara Khitai active mainly in the Ghurid realm, in his 'Four Discourses', treats four classes of men whose services were deemed essential to every king: secretaries, poets, astronomers and physicians. Medicine and astronomy were also highly regarded by nomadic and Chinese rulers, due to their functions of healing and reading the will of heaven.<sup>31</sup> Indeed these fields flourished in the Qara Khitai realm, often under the auspices of their vassal rulers or officials.

Medicine was a popular occupation, in continuation of the tradition of Ibn Sina (d. 1030) – especially in Samarqand, where one of the first Islamic hospitals was established by the Qarakhanid rulers in the eleventh century.<sup>32</sup> The medical works of Badr al-Din al-Qalanisi al-Samarqandi (d. 1194) and of Hamid Muhammad b. 'Abdallah Najib al-Din al-Samarqandi (d. 1222) are extant, and both doctors are recorded in biographical dictionaries written further west.<sup>33</sup> In addition, 'Awfi provides us with information on various other doctors, including his maternal uncle, Majd al-Din 'Adnan, the 'King of the Doctors', whose family specialised in providing medical care to local rulers for several generations.<sup>34</sup> Medical works were studied in colleges, but the practice was learnt by apprenticeship. According to 'Awfi, for a highly talented student, the training took four years.<sup>35</sup>

The presence of astronomy is less prominent in the contemporaneous literature, although Fakhr al-Din al-Razi's attack on astrology was not well received in Transoxania,<sup>36</sup> and the reference to the above-mentioned Shams al-Din al-Uzgandi, as well as Nizami-yi 'Arudi's description of the woman astrologer in his service, attests to its presence.<sup>37</sup> Several astronomical works from the eastern Islamic world (Khwarazm and Ghazna)<sup>38</sup> survived, but the main evidence for the prominence of astronomy in the region comes from the Mongol period: when the Daoist patriarch Changchun arrived in Samarqand to meet Chinggis Khan, he met 'the head of the observatory', a certain Mr Li. While this Chinese astronomer might have come to Central Asia with the Mongols, the Muslim astronomers, whose work was highly appreciated in the same period by Yelü Chucai, Chinggis Khan's Kitan advisor and astrologer, were certainly local.<sup>39</sup> Jamal al-Din al-Bukhari, whom the Mongol Qa'an Möngke (r. 1251–59) invited to establish an observatory in Mongolia and who eventually founded one in Yuan China, was probably also educated in Transoxania.<sup>40</sup> The descriptions of Iranian astronomers who originated in or visited Mongol Bukhara, and the presence of Khotanid and Kashgarid astronomers in the thirteenth-century Maragha observatory, attest to the high level of astronomical studies in pre-Mongol Central Asia.<sup>41</sup> This is another clear case in which Mongol upheavals disseminated Central Asian knowledge across Eurasia and into Iran and China.

Mathematics was also practised in the Qara Khitai realm, and in the late twelfth century one of the members of the Burhanid family, Muhammad b.

Umar b. Mas'ud, specialised in algebra, geometry and mathematics, and solved Euclidian and Aristotelian problems.<sup>42</sup>

In the humanities, many poets were active in Transoxania, and even further eastward. None of these poets reached the stature of contemporaneous Iranian luminaries such as Anvari (d. 1189), Khaqani (d. 1190), Farid al-Din 'Attar (1145–1221) and Sa'di (1210–91/92), but some of them, such as Suzani Samarqandi (d. 1166), won certain fame even in the larger Iranian world. These poets made their living by panegyrising their various patrons (local rulers, commanders, the Burhanid *sadrs*), competed with each other, and reflected on the era's upheavals.<sup>43</sup> As shown by 'Awfi, writing poetry was also a favourable activity of rulers and officials.<sup>44</sup> In terms of historiography, the revised edition of Narshakhi's *Tarikh-yi Bukhara* was dedicated to the Burhanid *sadr* in 1178, and a history of Turkestan was compiled (but did not survive) by 'Awfi's uncle Majd al-Din 'Adnan – the 'King of the Doctors' mentioned above. Around 1160, the *Sindbad namah*, a more literary work, was also dedicated to the Qarakhanid ruler Mas'ud b. Hasan.<sup>45</sup> All types of scientific and literary activity certainly thrived in the Qara Khitai realm.

### *The Qara Khitai's Contribution*

How much of these flourishing intellectual activities can be ascribed to the Qara Khitai? Indirectly, they provided the political and economic conditions that enabled them, and their religious tolerance and respect for scholars were also highly beneficial. But was there a more direct impact? Can we locate some specific effect of the unusual rulers who stressed their connection to China? The scarce documentation and the indirect rule of the Qara Khitai complicate the task of answering this question, or in general assessing the impact the Qara Khitai had on Central Asia, but a few tentative remarks are in order.

First, throughout the reign of the Western Liao, the blurred boundaries between China and Central Asia, and the Muslim perception of Central Asia as a part of China (or vice versa), continued and were even strengthened. Thus, in 1206 Fakr al-Din Mubarak Shah defined China (*Chin*) as part of Turkestan,<sup>46</sup> while both Kashgar and Balasaghun (the Qara Khitai capital in modern Kyrgyzstan) are described as cities of China in twelfth-century and later geographical works.<sup>47</sup> Francesco Calzolaio, who recently studied the representations of the Chinese world in Awfi's work, notes that even when retelling past anecdotes Awfi often replaces the ethnonym 'Turk' mentioned by his sources with 'the Chinese', thereby attesting to the growing affinity of the two groups among Qara Khitai subjects.<sup>48</sup> The title Tamghaj Khan (Turkic: the Khan of China) remained popular among the Qarakhanids, who were Qara Khitai vassals.<sup>49</sup> Moreover, in four epitaphs from Samarqand and Balasaghun, the title *Mufti al-sharq (or al-mashriq) wa'l-Sin*, the Mufti (jurisconsult) of the East and of China, is inscribed,<sup>50</sup> attesting to the religious elite's acknowledgement of a certain Chinese connection (or even identity).

Another facet of Chinese influence is in the realm of architecture: Liao motives are attested in the twelfth-century 'Aisha Bibi Mausoleum in Talas, which was an important Qara Khitai centre,<sup>51</sup> and some of the murals of the recently excavated twelfth-century Qarakhanid palace in Afrasiyab are reminiscent of Dunhuang models, thereby implying Buddhist-Turkestani influence (but Iranian content). They were described as early examples of Ilkhanid paintings, in which Chinese influence is of course apparent.<sup>52</sup>

Moreover, some of the Muslims who fulfilled important posts in the Qara Khitai administration might have acquired a degree of knowledge of Kitan or Chinese: we know that Mahmud Yalawach, Chinggis Khan's famous minister, who may or may not be identical with Mahmud Tai, the vizier of the last Gürkhan, spoke Chinese (though he might have acquired it after the Mongol conquest) – and the same was true of a few commanders and scholars of eastern origin who were active in Ilkhanid Iran, some of them perhaps of Qara Khitai origin.<sup>53</sup> Scholars and scientists who served the Qara Khitai were probably exposed to their diverse courtiers – among whom the Uighurs, a well-educated community whose members served as the tutors of the Qara Khitai princes, played an important role.<sup>54</sup> Furthermore, the emergence of female rulers in the thirteenth-century eastern Islamic world, most of them having Kitan connections (a topic that lies beyond the scope of this chapter)<sup>55</sup> suggests that the influence of the Qara Khitai on their new environment might have been deeper than the external sources enable us to detect.

### *Conclusion*

While it is not easy to assess the full impact of the Qara Khitai on the Iranian world between the Seljuq and the Mongol periods, it can be argued that they gave the *coup-de-grâce* to Sanjar's rule, thereby putting an end to the power of the Seljuqs in eastern Iran. What is more, their reign can be seen as a prelude to the Mongol invasion. Much less violent than that of the Mongols, Qara Khitai rule proved to the Central Asian Muslims that infidel rulers could be tolerated, and might have introduced them to some elements in the Chinese world order, notably the Chinese language. Both features facilitated the later inclusion of Central Asian and Iranian Muslims in the Mongol Empire, and enabled them to benefit fully from the opportunities opened up by the Mongol period.

More importantly, the relative stability and prosperity that the Qara Khitai brought to Central Asia enabled the flourishing of both religious and scientific activity under their rule, especially in the fields of Hanafi law, Sufism, medicine and astronomy. With the upheavals of the Mongol invasions and the relative instability of the Chaghadaid Khanate – the Mongol state in Central Asia – the educated elite of the Qara Khitai realm dispersed across Eurasia, thereby disseminating the regional intellectual and technical achievements of the period, and making them an important part of Muslim scholarship in Iran, the Muslim world and beyond.

## Notes:

1. This study was supported by grant 602/12 of the Israel Science Foundation, and made use of the database of the ERC Project *Mobility, Empire and Cross Cultural Contacts in Mongol Eurasia* (Grant Agreement n. 312397).
2. On the Qara Khitai, see M. Biran, *The Empire of the Qara Khitai in Eurasian History: Between China and the Islamic World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Wei Liangtao (魏良弢), *Kalahan wang chao shi, Xi Liao shi* (喀喇汗王朝史, 西辽史) (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 2010).
3. For the Liao see, for example, V. Hansen, F. Louis, and D. Kane, eds, *Perspectives on the Liao, Journal of Song-Yuan Studies*, XLIII (2013); Shen Hsueh-man, ed., *Gilded Splendor: Treasures of China's Liao Empire (907–1125)* (Milano: Five Continents and New York: Asia Society, 2006); D. Twitchett and K.-P. Tietze, 'The Liao', in D. Twitchett and H. Franke, eds, *The Cambridge History of China, Vol. 6: Alien Regimes and Border States 907–1368* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 43–153; Karl A. Wittfogel and Feng Chia-sheng, *History of Chinese Society: Liao (907–1125)* (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1949); Liu Pujiang (刘浦江), *Song mo zhi jian: Liao Jin Qidan Nuzhen shi yan jiu* (松漠之间: 遼金契丹女真史研究) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2008); Liu Pujiang (刘浦江), *Liao Jin shi lun* (遼金史論) (Shenyang: Liaoning daxue chubanshe, 1999). For the Kitan language, see D. Kane, *The Kitan Language and Script* (Leiden: Brill, 2009). On Liao relations with the Muslim world, see M. Biran, 'Unearthing the Liao Dynasty's Relations with the Muslim World: Migrations, Diplomacy, Commerce and Mutual Perceptions', *Journal of Song Yuan Studies* XLIII (2013), pp. 221–251.
4. For more on the Kitans in West Asia, see Biran, *Empire of the Qara Khitai*. On the Jurchens, see, for example, H. Franke, 'The Chin Dynasty', in D. Twitchett and H. Franke, eds, *The Cambridge History of China, Vol. 6: Alien Regimes and Border States 907–1368* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 215–320.
5. D. Kane, 'The Great Central Liao Kitan State', in Hansen and Louis, *Perspectives on the Liao, Collection of Papers Prepared for the Yale-Bard Graduate Center Conference, September 30 to October 2, 2010* (New Haven/New York, 2010), p. 7. This paragraph, however, does not appear in his published article: D. Kane, 'The Great Central Liao Kitan State', *Journal of Song-Yuan Studies* XLIII (2013), pp. 27–50.
6. V. P. Zaytsev, 'Rukopisnii kniga bol'shogo kidan'skogo pis'ma iz kollektcii Instituta vostochnyx rukopisei RAN', *Pis'mennye Pamiatniki Vostoka* 2: 15 (Autumn–Winter 2011), pp. 130–50; Idem, 'Identifikatsiia kidan'skovo istoricheskovo sochineniia v sostave rukopisnoi knigi-kodeksa Nova N 176 iz kollektcii IBR RAN i coputstvuiushtsie problem', *Acta linguistica Petropolitana*, XI:3 (2015), pp. 167–208. Zaytsev analyses a book in the large Kitan script, unearthed in Kyrgyzstan. This is the only extant Kitan book, and by far the longest text of the Kitan large script. He suggested that the book is composed of several distinct compilations, one of them is the Kitan veritable records (*shilu*, the records subsequently used for compiling a dynastic history) of the first nine Liao emperors, while another is a collection of corresponding biographies. Unfortunately the book remains mostly undeciphered. See also Franz Grenet, 'Maracanda/Samarkand, une métropole pré-mongole: Sources écrites et archéologie', *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* LIX (2004), p. 1,064, which mentions the fragments of a gilded silver saddle ornament featuring a Liao dragon motif found in Samarqand and not yet published. For Qara Khitai coins, see V. A. Belyaev, V. Nastich and S. V. Sidorovich, 'The Coinage of Qara Khitay: A New Evidence', in B. Callegher and A. d'Ottone, eds, *Proceedings of the Third Simone Assemani Symposium on Islamic*

7. M. Biran, 'Between China and Islam: The Administration of the Qara Khitai Empire', in D. Sneath, ed., *Imperial Statecrafts: Political Forms and Techniques of Governance in Inner Asia, Sixth–Twentieth Centuries* (Bellingham, WA: Western Washington University Press, 2006), pp. 63–84. Kane recently suggested that the *Gür* element of the *Gürkhan* derives from Kitan \*gur, state (in this respect 'all-under-heaven', and hence 'universal Khan', as explained in the *Secret History* and Muslim sources); *khan* is a Turkic word meaning 'ruler'. To the best of my knowledge, this title was not in use in the Liao dynasty. D. Kane, 'Khitai and Jurchen', in A. Pozzi, J. Janhunen and M. Weiers, eds, *Tumen jalafun jecen akū: Manchu studies in honour of Giovanni Stary* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2006), pp. 124–25.
8. M. Biran, 'True to Their Ways: Why the Qara Khitai Did Not Convert to Islam', in R. Amitai and M. Biran, eds, *Mongols, Turks and Others: Eurasian Nomads and the Sedentary World* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), pp. 175–99.
9. Biran, *Empire of the Qara Khitai*, pp. 171–201, esp. p. 191.
10. Muḥammad b. Yūsuf al-Samarqandī, *al-Muṭtaḥḥaṭ fī al-fatāwā al-Hanafīyya*, ed. M. Naṣṣār and Y. Aḥmad (Beirut: Manshūrāt Muḥammad 'Alī Bayḍūn and Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 2000), pp. 254–55. I thank Dr. Zafar Najmaddinov of The Uzbekistan Academy of Sciences for bringing the text to my attention.
11. Abū al-Faṭḥ Abū Bakr 'Abd al-Jalīl al-Marghīnānī (d. after 651/1253), *Fatāwā fuṣūl al-ihkām fī uṣūl al-al-ahkām* (Calcutta: Asiatic Lithographic Press, 1827), pp. 17–18. My thanks to Yohanan Friedman for providing me with this important text; see his forthcoming article, 'Dār al-Islām and dār al-harb in Modern Indian Muslim Thought', in G. Calasso and G. Lancioni, eds, *Dar al-Islam / Dar al-Harb: Territories, Peoples, Identities* (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming). On the author, the son or grandson of the famous Ṣāḥib al-Hidāya (about whom see below), see, for example, al-Qurashī, *al-Jawāhir al-muḍīyya* (Giza: Hajr, 1993), vol. 4, p. 74; Lakanawī, *al-Fawā'id al-bahīyya* (Cairo: Maṭba'at al-sa'āda, 1906), pp. 146–47; W. Heffening, 'al-Marghīnānī', *EI2* 6 (1991), pp. 557–58.
12. Biran, *Empire of the Qara Khitai*, p. 177.
13. Juwaynī, *Ta'rikh-i jahān gushā*, ed. M. M. Qazwīnī (Leiden/London: Brill, 1912–37), vol. 1, p. 53 – transl. J. A. Boyle as *Chinggis Khan: The History of World Conqueror* (reprinted, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), p. 71.
14. L. N. Dodkhodoeva, *Epigraficheskie pamiatniki Samarkanda XI–XIV vv. Tom 1* (Dushanbe: Donish 1992), pp. 132–210 (inscriptions 25–115); for discussion of the curriculum, see especially pp. 157, 161, 186. See also V. N. Nastits, 'K epigraficheskoi istorii Balasaguna', in V. A. Livshits, V. M. Ploskikh and V. D. Goriacheva, eds, *Krasnaia Rechka i Burana* (Frunze: Ilim, 1989), pp. 158–77; V. N. Nastits, 'Arabskie i Persidskie nadpisi na kajrakakh s gorodishcha Burana', in E. A. Davidovitch, ed., *Kirgiziia pri Karakhanidakh* (Frunze: Izd-vo Ilim, 1983), pp. 221–34. For the three authors, see below.
15. Al-Sam'ānī, *Kitāb al-ansāb*, ed. 'A. 'A. al-Bārūdī (Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-'ilmiyya, 1988), vol. 1, pp. 141, 145, 156; vol. 2, pp. 95, 332; vol. 3, pp. 547; vol. 5, pp. 17, 19, 27, 104; al-Sam'ānī *Tahbīr* (Baghdad: Maṭba'at al-irshād, 1975), vol. 1, pp. 534; vol. 2, pp. 86–7, 172, 234–6, 261, 272, 350. See also al-Qurashī, *al-Jawāhir*, vol. 2, p. 314; Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Munāzarāt Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī fī bilād Mā Warā' al-Nahr*, in F. Kholeif, ed. and transl., *A Study of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī and His Controversies in Transoxania* (Beirut: Dār al-mashriq, 1966), esp. pp. 49, 53; 'Awfī, *Lubāb al-albāb*, ed. S. Nafīsī (Tehran: kitābkhānahyī Ibn Sīnā, 1954), p. 154.

16. See, for example, °Awfī, *Lubāb*, pp. 155, 178, 517; Zakariya b. Muḥammad Qazwīnī, *Āthār al-bilād wa-akhbār al-ibād* (Beirut: Dār ṣādir, 1380/1960), p. 510; Nasawī, *Sīrat al-sultān Jalāl al-Dīn Mankubirtī*, ed. H. A. Hamdī (Cairo: Dār al-fīkr al-°arabī, 1953), p. 68; Sibṭ b. al-Jawzī, *Mirā'at al-zamān fi ta'riḫ al-°yān* (Hyderabad: Maṭba'at majlis dā'irat al-ma'ārif al-°uthmāniyya, 1370-71/1951-52), vol. 8/2, p. 529; Abū Shāma, *Tarājim rijāl al-qarnayn al-°sādis wa al-°sābī' al-ma'rūf bi'l-dhayl °alā al-rawdatayn*, ed. M. Kawtharī (Cairo: Maktab nashr al-thaqāfa al-islāmiyya 1947), p. 57; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fi al-ta'riḫ* (Beirut: Dār ṣādir, 1965-67), vol. 12, p. 257; Ibn al-Sā'ī, *al-Jāmi' al-mukhtaṣar*, vol. 9, ed. M. Djawād [sic] and Anastase Marie de St Elie (Baghdad: Impremerie Syrienne Catholique, 1934), p. 202. See also Biran, *Empire of the Qara Khitai*, pp. 184-85.
17. See, for example, al-Tamīmī al-Dārī, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-sunniyya* (Cairo: al-Majlis al-°alā li'l-shu'ūn al-islāmiyya, 1970), vol. 1, p. 439; al-Qurashī, *al-Jawāhir*, vol. 2, p. 259; al-Samānī, *al-Ansāb*, vol. 3, pp. 198-99; D. V. Goriacheva and V. N. Nastits, 'Epigraficheskie pamiatniki Safid Bulana XII-XIV vv', *Epigrafika Vostoka XXII* (1984), p. 66.
18. Al-Rāzī, *Munāzarāt*, for example p. 58 (p. 80 in the translation).
19. *Ibid.*, for example pp. 48-52, 58 (pp. 70-75, 80 in the translation).
20. See, for example, al-Samānī, *Ansāb*, vol. 1, pp. 145, 156, 217, 461; vol. 3, pp. 86-87, 547; vol. 5, pp. 17, 27, 101; al-Samānī, *Tahbīr*, vol. 1, pp. 446, 534.
21. Al-Qurashī, *al-Jawāhir*, vol. 2, pp. 93-94, 213, 259, 323; vol. 3, p. 628; T. W. Joynboll and Y. Linant de Bellefonds, 'Kādī Khān', *EI2* 4 (1978), p. 377; Heffening, 'al-Marghīnānī', pp. 557-58.
22. Goriacheva and Nastits, 'Safid Bulana', pp. 61-72; D. V. Goriacheva, *Srednevekovye gorodskie tselny i arkhitekturnye ansambli Kirgizii* (Frunze: Izd-vo Ilim 1983), pp. 93-103; °Awfī, *Lubāb*, pp. 161-62, 165-66.
23. For the Qara Khitai, see Biran, *Empire of the Qara Khitai*, pp. 183-85; for the Chaghadaids, see, for example, Juwaynī, *Jahān gushā*, vol. 2, pp. 227-32; transl. Boyle, *Chinggis Khan*, pp. 272-76; Khwādamīr, *Habīb al-siyar*, transl. W. M. Thackston (Cambridge, MA: Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, Harvard University, 1994), vol. 3, pp. 44-46; Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *Talkhīs majma' al-°ādāb fi mu'jam al-°alqāb*, ed. M. Jawwād (Damascus: al-Matba'a al-Hāshimiyya, 1962-65), vol. 4.2, pp. 903, 1,106; vol. 4.4, p. 626.
24. Al-Rāzī, *Munāzarāt*, p. 14 (p. 36 in the translation); and see, for example, al-Qurashī, *al-Jawāhir*, vol. 2, p. 314; vol. 3, pp. 431-32; Samānī, *Tahbīr*, vol. 1, pp. 243, 403, 446, 553; vol. 2, pp. 42-43, 210; Dhahabī, *Ta'riḫ al-islām* (Beirut: Dār al-kitāb al-°Arabī 1995), vol. 50, pp. 254, 295; Nasawī, *Sīrat al-Sultān*, p. 68; Sibṭ b. al-Jawzī, *Mir'at al-zamān*, vol. 8/2, p. 529; Abū Shāma, *Dhayl*, pp. 57, 59; Ibn al-Sā'ī, *al-Mukhtaṣar*, p. 202; al-Balkhī, *Faḍā'il-yi Balkh*, ed. °A. Ḥābībī (Tehran: Bunyād-yi farhang-yi Irān, 1972), p. 370.
25. Shahab Ahmad, 'Mapping the World of a Scholar in Sixth/Twelfth Century Bukhāra: Regional Tradition in Medieval Islamic Scholarship as Reflected in a Bibliography', *Journal of the American Oriental Society* CXX (2000), pp. 23-43.
26. M. E. Subtelny, 'The Making of Bukhara al-Sharif: Scholars, Books and Libraries in Medieval Bukhara: The Library of Khwaja Muhammad Parsa', in D. Deweese, ed., *Studies on Central Asian History in Honor of Yuri Bregel* (Bloomington, IN, 2001), pp. 79-111; M. E. Subtelny and A. B. Khalidov, 'The Curriculum of Islamic Higher Learning in Timurid Iran in the Light of the Sunni Revival under Shāh-Rukh', *Journal of the American Oriental Society* CXV (1995), pp. 210-36.

27. See, for example, Ibn Ḥajar al-°Asqalānī, *al-Durar al-kāmīna* (Cairo: Dār al-kutub al-ḥadītha, 1966), vol. 2, p. 360; al-Dhahabī, *Ta'riḫ*, vol. 60, p. 490; vol. 58, pp. 87, 116-17; vol. 59, p. 97; vol. 57, pp. 86, 266; Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *Talkhīs*, vol. 4.3, p. 451; vol. 4.4, p. 844; Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *Majma' al-°ādāb fi mu'jam al-°alqāb*, ed. M. al-Kāzīm (Tehran: Mu'assasat al-ṭibā'a wa-l-nashr, 1995), vol. 4, p. 531; vol. 5, p. 102; ; al-Ṣafādī, *°yān al-°aṣr wa-°wān al-nashr*, ed. °A. b. Abū Zayd (Beirut/Damascus: Dār al-fīkr, 1998), vol. 1, p. 171; vol. 5, p. 365.
28. Samānī, *Ansāb*, vol. 1, p. 217; vol. 3, p. 432; Qurashī, *al-Jawāhir*, vol. 2, p. 323; Dodkhudoeva, *Epigraficheskie pamiatniki Samarkanda*, pp. 136, 138, 142, 172, 179.
29. Liu, Xinru, 'A Silk Road Legacy: The Spread of Buddhism and Islam', *Journal of World History* XXII (2011), pp. 76-78; H. Algar, 'Kubrā', *EI2* (Brill Online, 2014).
30. °Awfī, *Lubāb*, pp. 165-66 [a prototype to the Mongol-period polymaths?].
31. Nizāmī-yi °Arūḍī, *Chahār maqāla*, ed. M. Qazwīnī and M. Mu'īn (Tehran: Kitābfürūsh zawār, 1952), pp. 54-88 - transl. E. G. Browne (London: Luzac and co, 1921), pp. 62-96; T. T. Allsen, *Culture and Conquest in Mongol Eurasia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 141-75 (albeit for the Mongol period).
32. See, for example, S. Soucek, *Inner Asia: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 85.
33. C. Brockelman, *Geschichte der arabischen Literatur. Supplementband* (Leiden: Brill, 1938), pp. 893, 895-96; Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'a, 'Uyūn al-anbā' fi ṭabaqāt al-aṭibā', ed. Nizār Riḍā (Beirut: Dār maktabat al-ḥayāt, 1965), vol. 2, p. 472; al-Ṣafādī, *al-Wāfi bi'l-wafayāt*, ed. M. °A. al-Bahūt and M. al-Ḥiyārī (Beirut: al-Ma'had al-islāmī li'l-abḥāth al-sharqiyya 2008), vol. 2, p. 273.
34. °Awfī, *Lubāb*, pp. 154-57.
35. °Awfī, *Lubāb*, pp. 154-55.
36. Al-Rāzī, *Munāzarāt*, pp. 32-34 (pp. 56-57 in translation).
37. °Awfī, *Lubāb*, p. 165; Nizāmī-yi °Arūḍī, pp. 59-60, transl. Browne, pp. 67-68.
38. Brockelman, *Geschichte*, *sup 1*, pp. 683, 685.
39. Li Zhichang (李志常), *Changchun xi you ji* (長春西游記), in Wang Guowei (王國維), *Wang Guowei yi shu* (王國維遺書) (Shanghai: Shanghai guji shudian, 1983), vol. 13, pp. 328-29; transl. A. Waley, *Travels of an Alchemist* (London: G. Routledge & sons, ltd., 1931), pp. 94-95, 97; Su, Tianjue (蘇天爵), *Yuan wenlei* (元文類) (Taipei: Shijie shuju yingxing, 1967), Chapter 57, p. 22b.
40. Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmi' al-tawāriḫ*, ed. B. Karīmī (Tehran: Iqbāl, 1338/1959), vol. 2, p. 718 - transl. W. M. Thackston, *Jāmi' -'u't-tawāriḫ [sic] Compendium of Chronicles* (Cambridge, MA: Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, Harvard University, 1998-99), vol. 2, pp. 501-2; Song, Lian (宋濂), *Yuan shi* (元史) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1976), Chapter 7, p. 136; Chapter 90, p. 2,297. On Jamāl al-Dīn, see Allsen, *Culture and Conquest*, pp. 167ff.
41. Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *Talkhīs*, vol. 4.4, pp. 704-5; *Idem*, *Majma'*, vol. 1, p. 246-47; M. Fallahzadeh, *Persian Writing on Music: A Study of Persian Musical Literature from 1000 to 1500 AD* (Uppsala: University of Uppsala Press, 2005), p. 98. The Marāgha observatory was established in the 1260s by Hülegü.
42. °Awfī, *Lubāb*, p. 151; see also Brockelman, *Geschichte*, *Suppl 1*, p. 680.
43. °Awfī, *Lubāb*, pp. 500-25.
44. *Ibid.*, pp. 23-70.
45. *Ibid.*, pp. 154-55; al-Kātib al-Samarqandī, *Sindbād nāmāh*, ed. A. Ates (Istanbul: Vizāzisti Farhang, 1948); Muhammad Narshakhī, *Tāriḫ-yi Bukhārā*, ed. C. Schefer (Paris: E. Leroux, 1892), transl. R. N. Frye, *History of Bukhara* (Cambridge, MA: Mediaeval Academy of America, 1954).



46. Fakhr al-Dīn Mubārak Shāh, *Ta'rikh-i Fakhru'd-Dīn Mubārakhshāh* [sic], ed. E. Denison Ross (London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1927), p. 39. See also the title of the map, since lost, quoted on p. 61: 'The Country of China: Map of Turkestan and Transoxania' (*Bilād al-Šin: šūrat Turkestān wā-Mā warā' al-nahr*). On the blurred boundaries between China and Central Asia before the Qara Khitai, see Biran, *Empire of the Qara Khitai*, pp. 97–101.
47. Ibn Funduq (late twelfth century), *Tārīkh-yi Bayhaq* (Tehran: Bangā-yi dānish, 1938), pp. 5, 53; Ibn al-Dawādārī (fourteenth century), *Kanz al-Durar*, vol. 7 (Cairo: Dār ihyā' al-kutub al-ʿarabiyya, 1972), p. 238.
48. F. Calzolaio, 'A Boundless Text for a Boundless Author: The Representation of the Chinese World in Sadīd al-Dīn Muḥammad 'Awfī's Jawāmi' *al-Hikāyāt wa Lawāmi al-Riwāyāt*, *Studi e ricerche* IX (2017), pp. 109–29, esp. 124–26.
49. Biran, *Empire of the Qara Khitai*, pp. 100–1. For the Qarakhanid connections with the Sinitic states (Song, Liao, Jin), see M. Biran, 'Qarakhanid Eastern Trade: Preliminary Notes on the Silk Roads in the 11th–12th centuries,' in J. Bennmann and M. Schmauder, eds, *The Complexity of Interaction along the Eurasian Steppe Zone in the first Millennium CE. Empires, Cities, Nomads and Farmers* (Bonn: Vor- und Frühgeschichtliche Archäologie, Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn, 2015), pp. 575–95.
50. Dodkhudoeva, *Epigraficheskie pamiatniki Samarkanda*, pp. 156, 179; M. Hartmann, 'Archaeologisches aus Russisch-Turkestan – III', *Orientalistische Literatur-Zeitung* IX (1906), pp. 297–304; Nastits, 'K epigrafitseskoi istorii Balasaghuna', pp. 225, 232–33.
51. V. D. Goriacheva and S. I. Peregudova, *Pamiatniki istorii i klytury Talaskoi doliny* (Bishkek: Kyrgyzstan, 1995), pp. 62–68; M. Kervran, 'Un monument baroque dans les steppes du Kazakhstan: le tombeau d'Orkina Khatun, princesse Chaghatay?', *Arts Asiatique* LVII (2002), pp. 5–32, esp. pp. 12–13. Kervran suggested an identification of this building with the mausoleum of Orghina Khatun (r. 1251–59), because of the multifaceted Chinese influence on its architecture. This conjecture, however, has no textual or any other basis, and is opposed to the opinion of the local archaeologists cited above.
52. Yuri Karev, 'Qarakhanid Wall Paintings in the Citadel of Samarqand: First Report and Preliminary Observations', *Muqarnas* XXII (2005), pp. 45–84; F. Grenet, 'The Discovery of the Court Culture of the Qarakhanids (XIth – Beginning of XIIIth Centuries)', talk given at Cambridge, 10 December 2010.
53. See, for example, Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *Talkhīs*, vol. 4/3, p. 297 (Kuṭb al-Dīn Abū al-Fath Nuḥammad b. Šamd Tayangu, perhaps of Qara Khitan origin, who was employed at the Ilkhanid court); vol. 4/2, p. 1,201 (the *emir* Ghiyāth al-Dīn Kāshgarī, of a notable Kāshgarī family, born in Bukhara, joined the Mongol army and arrived in Iran with Hülegü's troops).
54. On the Uighurs under the Qara Khitai, see Biran, *Empire of the Qara Khitai*, esp. pp. 125–27.
55. *Ibid.*, pp. 160–68.