

Nomadic Governments of Central Asia from Ancient Times to the Middle Ages

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Abstract

This article explores the history of nomadic states in the Central Asian region from ancient times to the Middle Ages. Particular attention was paid to the formation and evolution of nomadic socio-political structures, their influence on surrounding regions, and their interaction with neighboring civilizations. The article examines key nomadic states such as the Xiongnu, the Karakhanids, the Mongols and the Timurids and their role in shaping the historical and cultural landscape of Central Asia. Based on archaeological and historical data, it analyzes the reasons for the emergence and decline of these states, their relationship with their neighbors, and their significance for world history.

Keywords

Nomadic States, Central Asia, Ancient Times, Middle Ages

1. Introduction

The culture of Central Asia has undergone significant changes over thousands of years, from antiquity to the present day. These changes were due to many factors: migrations, conquests, trade routes and the spread of religions.

Antiquity and the early Middle Ages. In ancient times, starting from the era of the Saka tribes (VIII-V centuries BC), the culture of Central Asia was strongly influenced by Iranian-speaking peoples such as the Persians. These people introduced elements of Zoroastrianism, art and architecture. With the development of the Great Silk Road, Central Asia became an important crossroads between East and West. This period also saw the formation of nomadic traditions that had a profound impact on the culture of the region, including weapons, forging, and textiles.

Middle Ages. In the 8th-13th centuries, the influence of the Arabs and the

spread of Islam in Central Asia increased, which significantly changed cultural and social structures. Central Asia becomes the center of Islamic civilization, which is reflected in architecture (for example, mosques and madrassas), literature, science and philosophy. Traditional nomadic lifestyles are being replaced by sedentary life and an urban way of life.

Mongol and Timurid conquests (XIII-XV centuries). The Mongol conquests, in particular the fall of the Khwarezmian and Karakitayan states, led to the destruction of many cities, but also promoted cultural exchange, especially through the Mongol and Turkic dynasties. With the arrival of Timur in the 14th century, Central Asian cities such as Samarkand and Bukhara became important cultural centers.

Modern times (XVI-XIX centuries). In the 16th-18th centuries, Central Asia was influenced by Persian and Russian cultures. Following Russian expansion in the 19th century, the integration of Central Asia into the Russian Empire began, which had an impact on local traditions and culture, including education, administrative and legal structures.

Modernity. With the advent of Soviet power in the 20th century, a significant transformation of cultural and social life took place. At this time, new ideologies were being introduced, such as communism and secularism, as well as attempts at modernization and industrialization. After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, cultural processes in Central Asia began to develop again under the influence of national identity, Islamic revival and globalization.

Thus, the culture of Central Asia has undergone multiple changes under the influence of external and internal factors. It remains rich and diverse, having absorbed elements of many world civilizations.

In antiquity, most of Central Asia was inhabited by nomadic tribes, known to the Greeks as “Scythians” and to the Iranian-speaking peoples as “Sakas”. The Sakas were a freedom-loving nomadic society; they lived in tribes, but never had a unified state. They lived by the fact that most of them were engaged in cattle breeding, on some fertile territories were engaged in small-scale agriculture mainly growing wheat, millet, barley. Militarily, the Sakas always used their cavalry, they never engaged in battle, on foot. For the first time we learn about the military art of the Sakas in the VI century BC when the king of the Achaemenid Empire Cyrus II the Great went on a campaign against one of the Saka tribes Massagetae (**Figure 1** and **Figure 2**), which at that time ruled the queen Tomiris. Sakas used the strategy of ambushes, quick raids at the same time not entering with Persians in an open battle. After at Persians rather thinned ranks, Saki with queen Tomiris has decided to give open fight to Persians on results of which the Persian army has been completely broken, and Tsar Cyrus II has been beheaded (Halsall, 1996). All nomadic peoples of Central Asia will use the same strategy of warfare in the future. Saki did not have a single political structure, and represented unions of various tribes and clans. At different times, different groups of Sakas created strong states or confederations. The era of Saka rule ended in the middle of the II

century BC when, after migration, Usun tribes came to the Saka territory and knocked the Sakas out of their former territory, forcing them to migrate to the west and south, where in time the peoples living there assimilated them (Bartold, 1963).



Figure 1. Tribal Confederations of Sakas in the Territory of Central Asia. The era of dominance in the Central Asian and Ural steppes by the Saka is commonly designated using archaeological terms or terms such as “Early Iron Age”, “Early Nomadic Era”, or “Scythian Era”.

During the first millennium BCE, numerous tribes collectively known as the Saka inhabited vast territories encompassing Northern India, Afghanistan, Central Asia, and the southern part of Kazakhstan. Herodotus (5th century BCE) and other ancient historians referred to them as the Asian Scythians. The Saka tribes coexisted with the Scythians, who inhabited the Northern Black Sea region and the Dnieper River basin, and the Sarmatians in the lower Volga region and southern Ural Mountains. They were contemporaries of the Persian kings Cyrus and Darius I, as well as the Greeks during the time of Alexander the Great. They maintained close contact with the ancient Persians and even became part of the Achaemenid Empire during the 5th to 4th centuries BCE.



Figure 2. The Saka tribes were dispersed across Central Asia either in the 1st millennium BCE or during the 7th to 8th centuries BCE. Information about the ancient Saka can be found in the works of Herodotus.

“By their clothing and way of life, they resemble the Scythians,” Herodotus describes the Saka.

The Saka-Tigraxauda, known for wearing pointed hats, settled in the region of Semirechye and the Tien Shan mountains.

The Saka-Paradrava tribes settled in the region of the Aral Sea and the lower reaches of the Syr Darya River.

Archaeological research. Studies of ancient settlements of the Saka tribes, such as settlements on the territory of modern Kazakhstan, suggest a significant level of social fragmentation. There is no evidence of the existence of a centralized state; rather, there were various tribal associations, coalitions and confederations.

Historical works. Works by such authors as I. M. Dyakonov and A. L. Chertkov, who describe the Sakas as federations of tribes, and not as a single state. They point to the diversity of political forms that existed among the Sakas and the absence of a single centralized authority.

Ancient sources. Ancient authors, such as Herodotus, in their works emphasize that the Saks were united only by a common origin and traditions, and not by a single political structure.

2. Xiongnu Era

The Xiongnu first mentioned in Chinese chronicles in the 5th century BC, when they began to raid the territory of Northern China (Khalpakhchyan, 1970). This fact, as well as a number of others prompted the Chinese to start building various kinds of fortifications on their northern borders, over time; these fortifications began to connect into one because of what appeared the “Great Wall of China” (Borovkova, 1989).

The Xiongnu gained considerable power in the 3rd century B.C., when the ruler of the Xiongnu, Maude, with the title of Shanyu, united neighboring tribes and founded the first “nomadic empire” in history, the Xiongnu Empire. The Xiongnu Empire occupied a large part of Mongolia and Southern Siberia, stretching from Manchuria in the east to the Pamirs in the west. After the formation of their empire xiongnu almost immediately went to war on the Chinese Empire Han, only the promise to give out the imperial daughter for Shanyu allowed to conclude a peace treaty with the Xiongnu, but also under the terms of the treaty the Chinese became in fact tribute to the Xiongnu annually paying them tribute while the Chinese themselves called them “gifts”. The Huns also received the right to duty-free trade in the lands of China, which led them to close trade contacts with the Chinese.

The Xiongnu were a nomadic people. Herds of horses, oxen, rams and camels determined the rhythm of their life. The Xiongnu traveled with their cattle in search of water and pastures. They fed exclusively on meat. The Huns’ clothes were made of leather; they lived in felt tents in the parking lots and slept on furs. The lands south of the Huang He River were of great economic importance for the Xiongnu: sand dunes with good grass cover, salt meadows in the lowlands and

numerous lakes with fresh water created extremely favorable conditions for nomadic cattle breeding (Pustolyakova, 2015).

The position of tribute did not suit the Chinese in any way, and in order to fight against the Xiongnu in 138 B.C., a diplomatic embassy of about 100 people led by the diplomat Zhang Qian was sent to the west to conclude a military alliance with the Yuezhami—the fierce enemies of the Xiongnu. In the foothills of the Nanshan the Xiongnu captured embassy led by him. Only 10 years later Zhang Qian together with several companions managed to escape. Through the Tien Shan, he went to Lake Issyk-Kul, descended into the Fergana Valley, from where he got to the country of Kangyu. Kangyutsy helped, finally, Zhang Qian to find yuechzhey: they settled to the south—in the interfluvium of the Syr Darya and Amu Darya, but by this time he forgot to think about fighting the Xiongnu because of which he had to return to China. In this campaign Zhang Qian traveled about 14.2 thousand kilometers and was the first to bring to China information about Asian deserts, steppes, great mountain structures of Central Asia: Pamir, Tien Shan, Kunlun; about the most important rivers, the Caspian (Northern) and Aral (Western) seas (Figure 3), life and customs of the peoples of these regions. He told of India, “where they fight while sitting on elephants”. His report contains information about lands as far as the Persian Gulf and the Mediterranean Sea. In 118 B.C., Zhang Qian’s second trek westward took place. His goal was to establish diplomatic ties with the nomadic state Usun, which was formed in the valley of the Ili River. This campaign was already more successful than the previous one, this time the Chinese managed to conclude a military alliance with the Usuns against the Xiongnu (Qian, 2018; Azbelev, 2018).

Thanks to Zhang Qian’s travels, as well as his geographical notes and information about the countries and peoples living in the west, the Great Silk Road appeared which would be the most important trade route for one and a half thousand years.

After concluding a military alliance with the Usuns, the Chinese declare war on the Xiongnu, and with the help of the Usuns deal them a crushing blow. After this defeat the Xiongnu Empire could not recover and plunged into the abyss of internecine conflicts, after which in the middle of the I century BC their power split into two parts. In the middle of II century A.D. the Xiongnu were finally killed by the new nomadic tribes Xianbinya, after which part of the remaining mixed with Xianbinya and other tribes, and part migrated westward to the Volga and further to Europe, where they became known as “Huns”.

The Xiongnu era is an important period in the history of migratory movements and cultural contacts in Eurasia. Its study helps to understand the processes of formation of ethnic and political boundaries in antiquity and their impact on modern ethnic and cultural landscapes.

3. The Age of Turkic Khaganates

The Age of Turkic Khaganates represents a period in the history of Central Asia

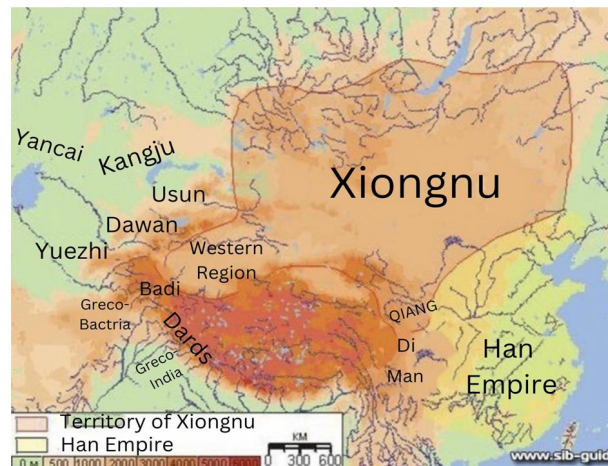


Figure 3. Central Asia around 135 BCE (according to the accounts of the traveler Zhang Qian).

and Eastern Eurasia when Turkic peoples formed powerful political entities known as Khaganates. This period falls roughly between the 6th and 10th centuries A.D.

After the fall of the Hunnu Empire, countless nomadic states formed and disappeared in Central Asia. For a long time, there was no force that could unite numerous tribes into one single state. However, the geopolitical map of Central Asia changed dramatically in the middle of the 6th century A.D., after the emergence of the Great Turkic Khaganate. Turkic Khaganate has appeared because of association of Turks under the leadership of Ashin's sort and the subsequent defeat of Zhuzhan Khaganate (Grach, 2016). Further Turks began to expand their borders on the west and east, in the west their borders have reached to empire Sassanids, and in the east they have reached China. After that rapid expansion on the territory of the entire Khaganate passed the entire Silk Road that brought huge profits to the Turks and allowed them to spread their influence on neighboring states. During their conquest campaigns, Turks managed to conquer Sogdiana territory in Central Asia between Amu Darya and Syr Darya (Figure 4). This fact allowed the Turks to control the oasis cities that were located there and this greatly strengthened their position to control the Silk Road. At that time, the Persians and Chinese were actually vassals of the Turks, paying them annual tribute and bestowing the rulers of the Turks, who bore the title of "Kagan" with various expensive gifts. This time can rightly be considered the absolute power of the Turkic Khaganate, their lands included the entire steppe of Asia.

However, by the end of VI century in the state of Turks there was a strong political crisis because of problems with the throne of succession among their rulers, which led in 603 to the disintegration of the united Turkic Khaganate into western and eastern parts.

After the given split in the Western Turkic Khaganate there was the heaviest political crisis as a result of which it ceases to exist, and on its place come nomadic tribes Turgesh, which found their own state Turgesh Khaganate.

The Eastern Turks faced a threat from the new unified Chinese Tang Empire, which pursued an aggressive policy towards the Turks. China managed to vassalize the Eastern Turks, after which they forced the latter to migrate many families to their northern borders in order to protect them from other nomadic tribes. In such subordination Turks were more than 50 years, until in 681 Turks led by Hagan Kutlug rebelled against the Chinese and created the Second Eastern Turkic Khaganate. Policy of Turks of that time consisted in restoration of the greatness and territories of an epoch of Great Turkic Khaganate. Aggressive policy of Turks has led them to confrontation with a number of various states and even creation of the whole anti-Turkic coalitions. At first, the Turks managed to contain and even defeat their enemies, especially under such rulers as: Kutlug, Kapagan and Bilge-Kagan.

Speaking about these outstanding personalities, we would also like to touch upon the culture of the Turks. One of the signs of the Turkic culture were balbals—small sometimes worked stone pillars. In the Turkic Khaganate balbals were set in front of a stone sculpture with the image of a person's face. The number of balbals emphasized the importance and authority of the deceased. At Bilge-Kagan and Kul-Tegin rows of balbalas reached 2 - 3 km. On balbals sometimes, the names of the defeated leaders were indicated (Gumilev, 1967).

However, after death Bilge Hagan in 734, the government of Turks has plunged in the heaviest internal political crisis after what in 10 years the Second Eastern Turkic Khaganate has ceased to exist, and it was replaced by Uigur Khaganate.



Figure 4. The Turkic Khaganate between 6th to 7th centuries.

4. The Age of the Uigur and Kyrgyz Khaganate

After the fall of the Second Eastern Turkic Khaganate, new nomadic Uighur tribes came to the territory where the Turks lived (Figure 5). The Uyghurs by that time were under strong Chinese influence, and their administrative system was completely similar to the Chinese, the Uyghurs themselves became loyal allies for China. The Uighurs twice saved the Chinese Tang Empire from its internal political crises and civil wars. The first happened in 755, when one of the Chinese commanders' An-Lushan, a Turk by blood, rebelled against the Chinese emperor, he

managed to gather a good army and seize the Chinese capital ([Big Russian Encyclopedia, 2004-2017](#)). The emperor had no choice but to turn to the Uighurs for help. The ruler of the Uighurs sent his army to help the emperor and they managed to defeat the usurper. The second time happened in 761 and again Uighurs helped China and in 770, they managed to completely restore order, the Chinese had to pay a huge tribute for their help.

The Uighurs established important colonies in the oases of Tarim in 800, which played a key role in their economic growth. These oases became centers of trade where the Uyghurs could exchange goods with caravans from different regions such as Iran and the Mediterranean. The economic prosperity of these colonies contributed to their cultural development and integration into international trade networks. Despite peaceful relations with China, the Uyghurs often made their own demands and claims for privileges, which created tensions between the two powers. The economic aspects of this relationship included trade in silk, metals, and other goods, making their economies interdependent and dictating the need for peaceful agreements and diplomatic efforts ([Butanaev, 2012](#)).

During its existence, the Uigur Khaganate faced internal rebellions more than once, but it managed to suppress them, but the end of the Uigur Khaganate can be considered the rebellion of the Yenisei Kyrgyz against the Uigurs in 820 and the subsequent 20-year war. As a result of this uprising in 840 the Kyrgyz destroyed the capital of the Uyghurs Ordo-Balyk and thus put an end to the existence of their state. The remaining Uyghurs had to migrate westward to what is now China's "Xinjiang" region, where they desperately defended themselves against the Kyrgyz, and succeeded. The Uyghurs settled firmly on these oasis lands, and in time they began to adopt a sedentary lifestyle instead of a nomadic one.

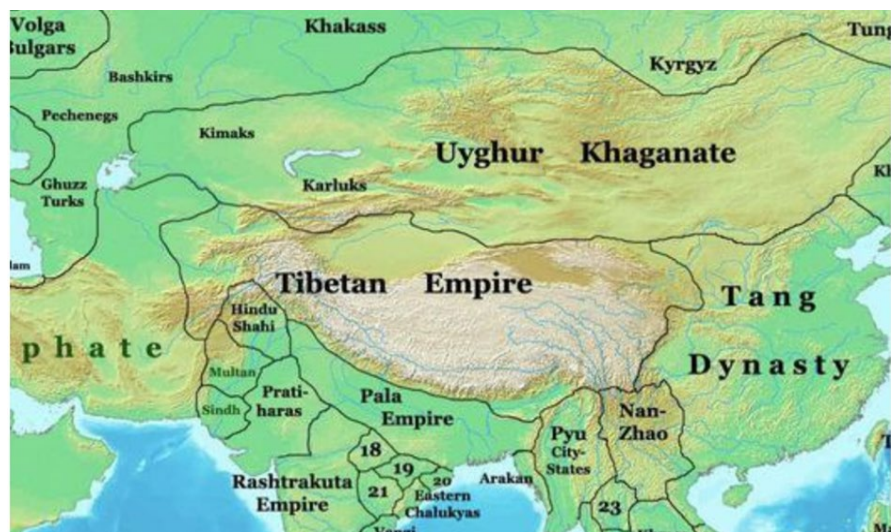


Figure 5. Uyghur Khaganate in the early 9th century.

The Uigur Khaganate was replaced by the Kyrgyz Khaganate, created by the Yenisei Kyrgyz in 840. The Kyrgyz Khaganate was a large power with a total

population of about 450 - 500 thousand people. The population of the Khaganate was engaged in agriculture, cattle breeding and various crafts. Writing (known as Orkhon-Yenisei) and literacy (Choroev, 2005; Asimov & Bosworth, 2016) were widely spread here. The period of 840 - 924 was called by academician V. V. Bartold as a “Kyrgyz Great Power”. By 924 the Kyrgyz Khaganate had lost territories in Eastern and Central Mongolia. Yenisei Kyrgyz preserved two main massifs of their settlement: 1) Upper and Middle Yenisei; 2) Altai and Irtysh. Subsequently, the Yenisei Kyrgyz divided into several branches. The Yenisei Kyrgyz were the last Turkic people to dominate the territory of Mongolia.

The era of the Kyrgyz Khaganate reflects an important stage in the history of the Kyrgyz people and their political development in antiquity. The study of this period allows us to understand the formation of the ethnic and political identity of the Kyrgyz, as well as their interaction with surrounding cultures and peoples in the Central Asian region.

With the departure of the Kyrgyz, the lands of modern Mongolia acquired the ethnographic character that has survived to this day (Abdukodirzoda, 2012). In fact, after this event, the Kyrgyz Khaganate ceased to exist. On the remaining possessions of the Kyrgyz soon formed several small states, which in 1207 were conquered by the Mongols.

5. The Age of the Karakhanid Khaganate

The Karakhanid state emerged in 942, when Satuk Bogra-Khan defeated his uncle. It existed in the era of dominance of Islam, at this time the old religions of shamanism and Tengrianism began to be forgotten more and more people converted to the new religion. Already in 960 Islam was accepted by the order of “200 thousand tents”—so the first Turkic Muslim state was formed.

The next political step was the conquest of Maverannahr and the war with the Samanids. Maverannahr is the term used since the 8th century for the historical and geographical region in Central Asia. It was in Maverannahr that the most important cities of the Islamic world of that period were located, as well as cities with high culture and civilization, such as Samarkand, Bukhara, Shash, Nakhshab, Karmana, Fergana, Khujand, Kesh and others (Kozin & Kozin, 1941).

Religion has played and continues to play a key role in changing the cultural and social structures of Central Asia. Various religious traditions intersected and interacted in this region, which largely determined its historical development.

Zoroastrianism. In ancient times, with the advent of Iranian-speaking tribes, Zoroastrianism became an important religion. It influenced cult practices, architecture and social customs. Zoroastrianism was the state religion of the Achaemenid Empire and was widespread throughout much of Central Asia.

Buddhism. In the period from the 1st century AD. e. Buddhism penetrated into Central Asia, especially into the areas that are now part of Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. Buddhism played an important role in cultural exchanges between India and China. Central Asia became an important center of Buddhist

civilization, especially in Tokharistan and Sogd, with flourishing Buddhist monasteries and cultural traditions.

Islam. Islam became the dominant religion in Central Asia after the Arab conquests in the 7th century. The influence of Islam changed not only the religious but also the social structure of the region. The creation and spread of Islamic states, such as the Samanid, Karakhanid and Seljuk states, played an important role in the development of literature, science, architecture and medicine. The art of calligraphy, architecture (mosques, madrassas), and Islamic law and philosophy had a lasting influence on the culture.

Thus, religion was not only a spiritual force, but also an important factor shaping the political map, cultural and social processes of Central Asia throughout history.

The Samanids were a Muslim dynasty that ruled in Maverannahr and Khorasan from 819-1005. The founder was a dekhkanin, Ahmad I b. Asad b. Saman Huda (819-864). In the 10th century the Samanid state included Maverannahr, Khorezm, Khorasan, Seistan and Gurgan. They managed to create a centralized state with a developed administrative apparatus. The Samanid capital Bukhara was one of the largest cities of the Muslim world, a center of science and culture. Muslim schools (madrassas) were established in all significant cities. Rudaki, Al-Farabi and others worked at the Samanid court. Architecture and construction also developed actively under the Samanids (Vernadsky, 1953).

During the Karakhanids' campaign, the Samanids had already become very weak and could not oppose them; this led to the fact that the Karakhanids took many cities without fighting, and in 999 the Samanid state ceased to exist. After that, the Karakhanids began to control the territories from Kashgar to the Syr Darya and Amu Darya rivers (Figure 6). The most important part of the Silk Road passed through their state. Karakhanid warriors often served as guards for caravans, they were also engaged in trade selling and exporting gold, silver, iron, furs, many breeds of horses, wool, meat and much more. The Karakhanid Khaganate played an important role in uniting the cultures of the peoples inhabiting the oases of Central Asia. The population of the vast steppe was drawn into the orbit of regular economic and cultural relations between oases and cities. In Maverannahr, at the court of the Karakhanids, a large group of court poets gathered, among them the most prominent were Emir Amaki Bukhari, Rashidi Samarkandi, Suzani Samarkandi and others, who wrote kasids, satires and lyric poems (Kozin & Kozin, 1941). Thus, the Karakhanids did not only gain recognition and fame by military victories. When they adopted a sedentary lifestyle, they also glorified themselves as scientists, architects, craftsmen and poets.

Despite all these developments and benefits, the state itself suffered from internal strife among the ruling elite, as a result of which the Karakhanid state split into western and eastern parts. After that both parts began to wage continuous wars with each other, this led to a noticeable weakening of both sides. This was taken advantage of by third forces, the eastern part was invaded by the Karakitai tribes,

and from the west by the Seljuk Empire. As a result, in 1210 the eastern part of the Karakhanids completely disappeared, the same happened to the western part 2 years later. This is how a truly unique state of the Middle Ages ceased to exist.

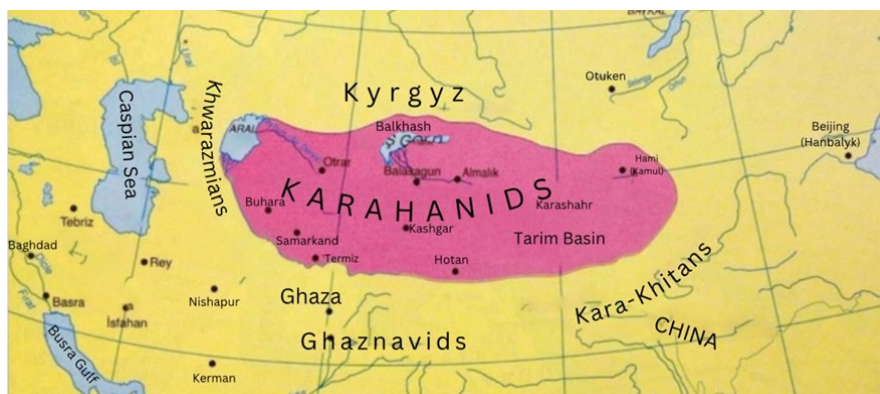


Figure 6. The Karakhanid Khaganate at its peak in the early 11th century.

6. The Age of Mongol Rule

In the late 12th and early 13th centuries, early Mongolian statehood began to emerge on the territory of modern Mongolia, a process that took place in incredibly brutal internecine wars among the many tribes that roamed there. The victory in this bloody war was won by one of the Mongol khans, Temujin, who successively defeated all his enemies in turn. In 1206 Temujin united all nomadic tribes and at the kurultai of the same year was proclaimed the Great Khan and received a new name Genghis Khan. Mongolia was transformed: scattered and warring Mongolian nomadic tribes united into a single state. The new law—Yasa of Genghis Khan (Bartold, 1963) came into force. In the Yasa the main place was occupied by articles on mutual aid in a campaign and prohibition of deception of the trusted. Who violated these provisions was executed, and the enemy of the Mongols, who remained loyal to their ruler, was spared and accepted into their army? Loyalty and bravery were considered good, and cowardice and betrayal were considered evil, even if it concerned the personal qualities of the enemy. Genghis Khan divided the entire population into tens, hundreds, thousands and tumens (ten thousand), thus mixing up tribes and clans and appointing specially selected people from his close associates and nokers as commanders over them. All adult and healthy men were considered warriors, who in peacetime ran their own household, and in wartime took up arms. The armed forces of Genghis Khan, formed in this way, amounted to about 100 to 130 thousand warriors. Separate hundreds, thousands and tumens together with the territory for nomadism were given in possession to this or that noyon (Bartold, 1963). The Great Khan, the owner of all land in the state, gave land and arats into the possession of the noyons, on the condition that they would fulfill certain duties. The most important duty was military service. Each noyon was obliged to put the required number of soldiers in the field at the first request of the suzerain. A noyon could exploit the

labor of the arats in his district by giving them his cattle for grazing or engaging them directly to work in his farm. Smaller noyons served large ones. Under Genghis Khan, the enslavement of the arats was legalized, and unauthorized transfer from one dozen, hundred, thousand or tumen to others was forbidden. This prohibition meant formal attachment of arats to the land of noyons—for disobedience a rat was threatened with death penalty. Genghis Khan created a network of communication lines, courier communication on a large scale for military and administrative purposes, organized intelligence, including economic intelligence.

Having collected under his command 100 thousand professional horsemen, Genghis Khan since 1207 began to actively conquer new lands, tribes of Kyrgyz, Oirats, Ugurs and as a whole all nomadic part of Central Asia became a part of the Mongol Empire (Genghis Khan | Biography, Conquests, Achievements, & Facts. *Britannica* (2022). Date of access: July 9, 2022. Archived June 18, 2015) [20]. Further the sight of Genghis Khan fell on rich China, at this time China was divided into 3 parts, Tangut kingdom, Northern Jin and Southern Song. The Mongols were the first to capture the Tangut kingdom. And they became their vassals, further since 1211-1215 expansion has been directed on the state Jin which result became full subjugation of Northern China. The Mongol conquest of the Karakitai Khanate was a military campaign of the Mongols during their campaign to conquer Central Asia. Even before the Mongol invasion began, the Khanate had been weakened by war with the Khorezmshah dynasty and the usurpation of power by Prince Kuchluk of the Naiman tribe. When Kuchluk laid siege to Almalyk, a city belonging to the Karluks, who were vassals of the Mongols, Genghis Khan sent a force under the command of Dzhebe to meet Kuchluk. After the thirty-thousand-strong army of the tsarevich was defeated by Djebe at Balasagun, a rebellion rose against Kuchluk, who was an unpopular ruler, forcing him to flee to the territory of modern Afghanistan, where he was captured in 1218 and handed over to the Mongols, who beheaded him (Trepavlov, 2013). After the victory over the Karakitai Khanate, the Mongols expanded their borders to the state of Khorezmshahs. At this time Khorezm ruled Khorezmshah Ala-ad-Din Mohammed II dreamed of capturing China, but when news reached him that a certain formidable ruler had already captured this country, he then equipped an embassy to Genghis Khan. This embassy was also equipped with a rich caravan with gifts and presents. Genghis Khan received the embassy cordially and sent a return embassy to Khorezm for Khorezmshah with the intention of concluding friendly and trade relations. However, when the caravan arrived in one of Khorezmian cities Otrar, the governor of this city detained Genghis Khan's ambassadors and all of them were soon put to death, and the whole caravan was looted, the sleeping people reported to Genghis Khan about what had happened. It is worth noting that the personality of the ambassador among the Mongols was considered sacred, and his murder was to be punished by blood retribution. Even so, Genghis Khan still tried to prevent the war, he sent another embassy demanding to extradite the governor of that city and bury the hatchet, but Khorezmshah ordered to kill the ambassadors, thereby

starting the war between the strongest states of Central Asia. So, from 1219 to 1223 during 4 years Khorezm was completely destroyed, the once rich state completely lay in ruins, although the Khorezmians had chances to win their army exceeded the number of Mongols, but Khorezmshah Ala-ad-Din Mohammed 2 chose the wrong tactics of the fight, instead of meeting the Mongols in a decisive battle, he spread his army in the cities hoping that the nomads could not take them, but the Mongols by that time had conquered China and brought from there siege equipment thanks to what took one Khorezmian city after another and completely devastated them (Bartold, 1963). In 1223 the war with Khorezm was over and Genghis Khan decided to return back to Mongolia, where in 1225 he triumphantly arrived in his capital Karakorum, where he began to carry out administrative work to improve the functioning of his empire. While in his capital, he decided to choose his heir and to divide his empire to his sons as an inheritance and to avoid internecine wars, initially the role of heir should have gone to his eldest son Juchi, but he always feuded with his brother Chagatai, who in public at his father called Juchi a freak, then Genghis Khan decided to make the heir of his third son Ugedei, because he was calm and generous. On his return from Central Asia, Genghis Khan once again led his army through Western China. According to Rashid-ad-din, in the fall of 1225, migrating to the borders of Xia Xia, while hunting Genghis Khan fell off his horse and badly bruised. By evening Genghis Khan began to have a high fever. As a consequence, on the morning the council was gathered, on which the question was “to postpone or not to postpone the war with the Tanguts”. The council was not attended by Genghis Khan’s eldest son Dzhuchi, to whom there was already a strong distrust, because of his constant evasions from his father’s orders. Genghis Khan ordered the army to march against Dzhuchi and finish him off, but the march did not take place, as the news of his death came. Genghis Khan was sick the whole winter of 1225-1226. In the spring of 1226 Genghis Khan again led an army, and the Mongols crossed the Xi Xia border in the lower reaches of the Edzin-Gol River. The Tanguts and some allied tribes were defeated and lost several tens of thousands killed. The peaceful population Genghis Khan gave to the flood and plunder to the army. This was the beginning of Genghis Khan’s last war. In December, the Mongols forced the Huang He and marched into the eastern regions of Xi Xia. Near Linzhou, a hundred-thousand-strong Tangut army clashed with the Mongols. The Tangut army was completely defeated. The way to the capital of the Tangut kingdom was now open. However, Genghis Khan himself did not manage to capture the capital, in August 1227 Genghis Khan died, but this did not save the Tanguts, who were subjected to a real genocide by the Mongols (Davidovich, 1972).

Genghis Khan was and is one of the most important figures in the history of mankind. He was a simple nomad, all his life remained illiterate, could not read and write, but it was under his leadership that the Mongolian alphabet was created on the basis of the Uighur alphabet, because he understood and believed in the power of written words. During his life he was able to create a huge empire, which

included all of Central Asia, Northern China, part of Persia. He was also incredibly clever and was calculating, able to wait, he chose and encouraged people, not for their ancestral origin, but solely on their qualities and talents, before him in the nomadic world so almost no one did. It is also worth noting that during the reign of Genghis Khan was created first-class postal system riders with messages was now much easier to get to their destination, and a day they could pass more than 200 kilometers. Thanks to their conquests, the influence and power of the Mongols spread throughout Asia for the next 2 centuries.

Genghis Khan had four his sons (from his first legitimate wife Borte). The eldest, Dzhuchi, did not get along with his father, and as early as 1221 he withdrew to his ulus and in early 1227 was killed by sent assassins. His children, Orda and Batu, received modest uluses on the barren northwestern edge of the empire. Horde—Southern Siberia, and Batu—the Ural-Caspian steppe with Khorezm in addition. The second son of Genghis Khan, Chagatai, was “the keeper of Yasa”, and his ulus was Central Asia. The third son, Ugedei, received Western Mongolia and Dzungaria. Genghis Khan recommended to elect him to the throne, as Chagatai was very cool and strict. Ugedei, as it turned out, was kind and prone to excessive drinking, so he did not seem dangerous to the Mongol nobility, who feared the Khan’s arbitrary rule. The fourth son, Tolui, who received according to Mongolian custom the core of the possessions of the Borjigin family - the central and western parts of Mongolia, was one of the most capable generals and energetic rulers. He received his military training in China, fighting against the best Jurchen commanders under the leadership of Subatei, who for fifty years of military service did not suffer a single defeat and never once violated the Yasa. Proximity to Subatei ensured Tolui’s popularity in the troops. It should be noted that only the Turkic-Mongolian steppes used for nomadic life were subject to division, and the conquered countries in the cultivated lands around Beijing or Samarkand remained territories of the empire. It did not occur to Genghis Khan’s sons to divide these lands or to become Emperor of China, Khan of Turkestan or Shah of Iran, as it happened later with their successors. By universal “brotherly” agreement, the empire had to remain an empire. According to the laws of nomads, despite the absolute power of the khan, the state belonged, rather, not to him personally, but to the entire khan’s family (Schiltberger, 2014).

After Genghis Khan’s death, the whole of Central Asia became part of the Ulus Chagatai. Chagatai’s headquarters were located west of Almalyk (modern Kulja or Inin) in Semirechye and were called Kuyash and Ulug-if (Ulug-ui - “Big House”). Ili valley with the main city Almalyk was the central part of his possessions and was called “Il-alargu” (Reva & Bragin, 2016). In Maverannahr real power possessed rather Khorezmian merchant, viceroy Mahmud Yalavach (1225-1238), appointed directly by Hagan Ugedei, than Chagatai. In 1238 Chagatai deposed Mahmud without the Khan’s consent. The khan rebuked his brother, but gave him direct civil administration of Maverannahr, transferring the tax payoff to Mahmud’s son Masud-bek (1238-1289) and at the same time extending his

authority over the entire Ulus of Chagatai.

The rulers of the Chagatai Ulus in the second half of the 13th century actively participated in the internal conflicts of the entire Mongol Empire, including civil wars. The apogee of this was their participation in the civil war on the side of the opponents of the then khan Khubilai. This war lasted until the beginning of the 14th century, when Khubilai's sons were able to finally defeat the Chagataids. During all these conflicts the population of Central Asia suffered the most. The Khans of the Ulus had no interest in the inhabitants of settled cities, they only wanted them to pay tribute and send troops to the next war or raid.

With all the feuds among the Chinggisids, Central Asia was actually ruled first by Khorezmian merchant Mahmud Yalavach, then by his son Masud-bek, and then successively by three sons of the latter. The Mongols were really not interested in the management of Central Asia and its internal affairs, and they saw the only meaning of Central Asia possession in receiving income from it through their protégé. Masud-bek outlived many nominal Chagataid and other ulus rulers: he fulfilled his task of supplying the stipulated revenues from Central Asia and therefore remained in his post regardless of internecine struggles. At this time, relative tranquility was established in Central Asia. But from time-to-time robberies and violence disturbed the normal course of life. In particular, in 1272-73 Bukhara was first robbed by the army of the Hulaguid sovereign, then by Chagataid princes, and then all together continued the massacre and robbery, so that the city and its district were completely devastated and there was no life there for seven years (Bustanov, 2009).

Later, due to constant internal conflicts, the Chagatai ulus actually split into two states by the 1340s. Mogulistan was formed in the eastern part of the ulus. In the western part Maverannahr. In 1346 emir of non-chingizid origin Kazagan came to power. Thus, the power of the Chagataids in Maverannahr ceased.

7. Timurid Era

After the collapse of the Chagatai Ulus in 1360, Tugluk-Timur conquered Maverannahr. However, already in 1362 Tugluk-Timur hastily left Maverannahr due to the rebellion of a group of emirs in Mogolistan, transferring power to his son Ilyas-Khoja. At this time, a certain man named Timur was appointed as an assistant to the young prince.

Timur was born on April 9, 1336 in the village of Khoja-Ilgar near the city of Kesh (now Shakhrisabz, Uzbekistan) in Central Asia. Timur spent his childhood and youth in the mountains of Kesh. In his youth, he loved hunting and equestrian competitions, javelin throwing and archery, and had a penchant for war games. From the age of ten atabeks, who served under his father Taragai, taught Timur military art and sports games.

Within 10 years Timur managed to gain the upper hand over his enemies and in 1370 became the de facto ruler of Maverannahr, but he could not carry the title of Khan because in that era were still alive the laws of Genghis Khan, according to

which only Genghisids in the right to call and carry the title of Khan. Therefore, Timur carried only the title of emir, but Timur's marriage with a representative of the Genghisid family allowed him to carry the honorable title "Guragan", that is "(khan's) son-in-law". After the conquest of Maverannahr, Timur began to actively expand his state, was conquered Khorezm, eliminated the threat from Mogolistan, within a short time conquered Persia, everywhere his campaigns were accompanied by unprecedented cruelty, Tamerlane ordered to kill all those who had or could offer any resistance.

The story of how Timur dealt with the inhabitants of Isfahan captured by him is indicative: "The latter immediately returned, but for 15 days could not seize the city. So, he offered the inhabitants a truce on the condition that they would give him 12,000 riflemen for some campaign. When these soldiers were sent to him, he ordered the thumb of each of them to be cut off, after which he sent them back to the city, which he soon took by storm. Gathering the inhabitants, he ordered all who were over 14 years of age to be put to death, sparing those under 14 years of age. The heads of the slain were stacked in the form of a tower in the center of the city. He then ordered the women and children to be taken to a field outside the city, where he separated the children under seven years of age. After this, he ordered his warriors to run over them with their horses. Tamerlane's own counselors and the mothers of these children fell on their knees before him and begged him to spare the children. But he did not heed their pleas and repeated his order, which, however, no warrior dared to fulfill. Being angry with them, Tamerlane himself came upon the children and said that he would like to know who would dare not to follow him. Then the warriors were forced to follow his example and trample the children with the hooves of their horses. The total number of trampled was about seven thousand. After that he ordered to set fire to the city, and women and children were taken away to his capital Samarkand, in which he was not 12 years" (Basovskaya, 2010).

After the conquest of Persia and Central Asia, Timur faced a new threat from the Golden Horde. At that time the Golden Horde was ruled by Khan Tokhtamysh, with whom Timur initially had friendly relations, because it was thanks to Timur Tokhtamysh who managed to ascend to the Khan's throne (Pugachenkova & Rempel, 1965). However, after coming to power in Golden Horde Khan Tokhtamysh began to carry out hostile policy in relation to the state of Timur. In 1387 Tokhtamysh has made a raid on Bukhara at that moment which was in structure of the state of Timur. The answer of Tamerlane has not made itself wait for 8 years. It has made 3 campaigns on Golden Horde. In 1395 Tamerlan made his last campaign against Tokhtamysh, having managed to finally smash him in the battle on the Terek, after which he chased him to the very borders of the Moscow principality and on the way plundered one of the border Russian cities of Yelets. After defeat Tokhtamysh Timur devastates many cities of Golden Horde after which last so and will not be able to restore, it in the future will play an important role in disintegration of Golden Horde, in fact cities were large economic and trading

points, and with their destruction stopped to pass and on lands of horde caravans that deprived in the future khans of the big profit. Tamerlane by the campaign on Golden Horde indirectly helped Russian principalities, in fact the Horde after such defeat so could not recover and could not stop process of association of Russian grounds in one whole under the Moscow principedom ([Newspaper.uz, 2023](#)).

Tamerlane's campaign to India is also worth noting. This campaign can be characterized as a plundering raid, but only with the scale of a real invasion. In 1398, Tamerlane and his army moved towards India, where he encountered the Delhi Sultanate, a state that at that time ruled Northern India. In the course of several battles Tamerlane managed to completely defeat the army of Delhiites and occupy the city of Delhi itself, subjecting it to total devastation, in the streets of the city was also started a bloody massacre of civilians. The whole of Northern India was plundered, Tamerlane in this campaign captured unprecedented booty and tens of thousands of slaves and artisans, but one of the most valuable were elephants, which were used by him in further campaigns and in the construction of new buildings in his capital. With all these riches Tamerlane returned back to Samarkand in 1399.

Upon returning from India in 1399, Timur immediately began a "seven-year" campaign against the Ottoman Empire. This campaign was initially prompted by unrest in the region ruled by Miran Shah. Timur deposed his son and defeated the invading enemies. One of the reasons for the seven-year campaign was Timur's conflict with Kara-Yusuf of the Kara-Koyunlu dynasty. The victory of Timur's troops forced the Turkmen leader Kara Yusuf to flee westward to the Ottoman Sultan Bayazid the Lightning. After that Kara Yusuf and Bayazid agreed on joint action against Timur. Sultan Bayazid responded to Timur's demand that Kara Yusuf be extradited to him with a scathing refusal. In 1400 Timur started military actions against Bayazid, who seized Erzinjan, where Timur's vassal ruled, and against the Egyptian sultan Faraj al-Nasir, whose predecessor, Barkuk, in 1393 ordered to kill Timur's ambassador. In 1400 Timur took the fortresses of Kemah and Sivas in Asia Minor and Halep in Syria, which belonged to the Egyptian sultan, and in 1401 took Damascus. Tamerlane and Bayezid met in a decisive clash at the Battle of Ankara on July 20, 1402, in which Timur succeeded in winning and defeating the Ottoman Sultan's army. The sultan himself was taken prisoner. As a result of the battle, Timur captured all of Asia Minor, and Bayezid's defeat led to internecine fighting among Bayezid's sons for power in the Ottoman Empire ([Prokhorov, 1970](#)).

Timur returned to Samarkand in 1404. There he spent several months in feasts and weddings of his grandchildren, for a short period of time there were erected new mosques and madrassas, but after that he began to actively prepare for the campaign against China. For this purpose, Timur gathered about 200 thousand horsemen, gave them all first-class equipment and divided his army in parts. By the end of November 1404 this army left Samarkand and headed for China ([Krisciunas, 1992](#)). By that time Timur was already 69 years old, he suffered from

illnesses and every day, he was getting worse and worse. Not reaching China on February 18, 1405, Tamerlane the creator of a huge empire, the crusher of all his enemies, a great commander and architect, died. before his death he said: "There is no God but Allah." During his life Tamerlan went on a huge number of campaigns, from there he brought not only treasures, but also prominent scholars, craftsmen, artists, architects. He believed that the more cultural people in the cities, the faster its development would go and the better its capital Samarkand would be, because Timur set a task for himself to make this city the most beautiful and richest in the world. Timur brought from all conquered lands masters, architects, jewelers, builders, architects in order to equip the cities of his empire: the capital Samarkand, his father's homeland—Kesh (Shakhrisabz), Bukhara, the border city of Yassy (Turkestan). All his care, which he put into the capital Samarkand, he managed to express through the words about it, "There will always be blue sky and golden stars over Samarkand" (Krisciunas, 1992). Timur paid very much attention to the development of Islamic culture and the improvement of places sacred to Muslims. In mausoleums of Shahi Zinda he erected tombs over graves of the relatives, on the instruction of one of wives which was named Tuman aka, there were erected a mosque, abode of dervishes, tomb and Chartag. Also, in Samarkand he erected many baths, mosques, madrasahs, dervish abodes, caravan-serais (Pugachenkova & Rempel, 1965).

All these factors tell us that Timur was not only a formidable warrior and conqueror like Genghis Khan, but was also a patron of science, art and culture. It was he who gave impetus to the beginning of the Timurid Renaissance, it was the moment when, after the Mongol invasion, the early destroyed cities began to revive again, science and art developed, and under his descendants Samarkand became a real center of science, astronomy and mathematics. This period was as important for Central Asia as the Renaissance was for Europe. However, immediately after Tamerlane's death, his empire began to fall apart, his descendants were unable to share power, and his defeated enemies again opposed his heirs. During this time Azerbaijan, Iraq and Iran were lost, Tamerlane's son Shahrukh managed to leave behind him the territories of Central Asia and Afghanistan and for a time to ensure peace in his state. However, in 1447 Shahrukh died and this hastened the collapse of his state. But up to this point, along with his father ruled, and his son Ulugbek. Ulugbek was a very intelligent and wise man, he devoted his life to the study of science, mathematics and astronomy, as well as the transformation of Samarkand into the scientific capital of the world (Krisciunas, 1992). Ulugbek was a peace-loving ruler and very rarely went on military campaigns against anyone, this aggravated his relationship with the military top. And his spending time with philosophers and scientists did the same thing, but with the clergy. Ulugbek was treacherously murdered by his own son on October 27, 1449, he was buried next to his great grandfather. After the murder of Ulugbek in Samarkand began mass persecution of scientists and poets, all their achievements were destroyed or forgotten, and the main construction of that era Ulugbek's observatory fell into oblivion. With the death of Ulugbek, the Timurid state finally begins to collapse. The

man who finally destroyed the Timurids' power was Muhammed Sheibani, a native of the Uzbek Khanate; in 1501 he captured Samarkand, and in 1507 Herat, the last stronghold of the Timurids, fell under the onslaught of his warriors. However, it was not the end for the descendants of the great Tamerlane, at the same time one of his descendants Babur through Afghanistan invaded India, where he created a new state of the Mughal Empire, but this is another story. So ended the era of Timurid rule in Central Asia, after that on its territory no longer appeared as strong, powerful and huge states as before, and Central Asia itself plunged into a huge period of wars and internecine conflicts. All this would further lead to its weakening and its conquest by more powerful neighbors such as China, Russia and Persia.

Studying the history of Central Asia from antiquity to the Middle Ages allows us to better understand the unique processes of formation of the cultural and political structures of the region. Central Asia, located at the crossroads of great civilizations, has always been a center of interaction between East and West, a meeting point for trade routes and the exchange of ideas. This study showed that the culture of the region developed under the influence of many factors, such as migrations of peoples, religious and cultural exchanges, and political transformations due to both internal processes and external conquests.

One key aspect is the diversity of political structures and social forms that characterize Central Asia. From nomadic societies such as the Sakas and Huns to more developed and centralized states such as the Samanid Empire or the Mongol-led states, each period is characterized by unique political features. It is important to note that despite the external diversity, the main elements uniting the peoples of the region have always remained common cultural and social traditions, the influence of religions and global trade networks. The role of religions in changing the cultural and social structures of Central Asia has also proven to be extremely important. Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Islam and other religious traditions not only shaped the spiritual and moral foundations of society, but also had a significant impact on political processes and international relations in the region. Islam, in particular, became the basis for the formation of a unified cultural and educational system that had a lasting influence on art, science and architecture.

In addition, the Renaissance in Europe, despite its remoteness, had an indirect impact on the development of Central Asia, promoting cultural exchanges and attracting attention to intellectual achievements, which was reflected in the scientific life of the region in subsequent centuries.

In conclusion, it can be argued that the study of the history of Central Asia opens up important prospects for further research, especially in the context of studying cultural and political processes, the formation of the identity of the peoples of the region and their role in global history. Thus, Central Asia appears as an important cultural and political center that not only served as a link between East and West, but also independently shaped key historical processes that are worth remembering in the context of global history.

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Conflicts of Interest

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