



Article

## The main aspects of cultural influence between the Turkic Khaganates and the Chinese Empire

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### ABSTRACT

The article explores the mutual cultural influence between the First and the Second Turkic Khaganates and the early medieval China. The authors consider the VI-VII centuries AD as an object of chronological research. In the 6th century, the first Turkic Khaganate was established and quickly became an important geopolitical neighbor of the Chinese Empire. The historical development of the Turkic Khaganate was closely linked to the Chinese Empire: it was the closest ally during periods of prosperity and the most significant threat during the Khaganate's decline. In the 7th century, the Turks lost their statehood for half a century and were subjugated by the Tang Empire. Despite this, it was at this time that the influence of Turkic culture on Chinese culture increased. The mutual influence of cultures was manifested in the following areas: religion, various traditions, art, music, objects of material culture, architecture, etc. The research makes it possible to better understand the aspects of diplomatic relations between the states, the motives for the development of the foreign policy vector between them. The article analyzes historical sources and uses archaeological and anthropological materials, and uses methods of systematic complex analysis.

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## **Introduction**

The ancient and early medieval history of Central Asia remains one of the least explored areas of world history. However, archaeological discoveries, historical and philological studies of recent decades support the assertion that the peoples inhabiting the inner regions of the Asian continent played a more significant role in the historical and cultural development of Eurasia than previously thought.

The cultural relations between the Turkic Khaganate and the Chinese Empire provide a unique example of interaction between two major civilizations in Central Asia. Formed in the 6th century, the Turkic Khaganate, already at the beginning of its historical development, rapidly expanded its influence, establishing contacts with various peoples and states, among which China under the Zhou and Qi dynasties playing a particularly significant role. The Khaganate's location at the crossroads of trade and migration routes contributed to the establishment of close cultural and economic ties, including those with Chinese civilization, known for its ancient traditions, a developed state system, and rich cultural heritage.

Cultural interaction between the Turkic Khaganate and China occurred through several key channels such as diplomacy, trade and knowledge exchange. These interactions spurred mutual influence in various fields, including language, writing, religion and art. Chinese sources document embassies, alliances and even marriage arrangements that strengthened political and cultural ties between the Khaganate and the Chinese dynasties. Trade also played a vital role, not only in economic exchange, but also in cultural assimilation: through the Silk Road, the Turks received Chinese goods, technology and ideas, which contributed to the enrichment of their own culture.

Studying the cultural ties between the Turkic Khaganate and medieval China helps us understand their interactions and assess the contribution of both civilizations to the region's cultural development.

The authors chose the 6th-7th centuries AD as the study period, focusing on the reign of the Ashina dynasty in the First and Second Turkic Khaganates. During this time, several Chinese dynasties rose and fell including the Wei (Zhou and Qi), Sui and early Tang dynasties, before the formation of the Uighur Khaganate. One of the objectives of this study is to systematize the materials obtained during the research. Given the broad scope of "culture," the information was organized into two main sections: the influence of the Chinese Empire on the Turks and the influence of the Turks on the Empire.

## **Materials and methods**

The main material base of the study can be divided into two groups: primary sources and secondary research. The first group comprises primary sources, including Chinese chronicles and translations of ancient Turkic written monuments. Key information is found in the annals of the Northern Zhou dynasties (556-581) such as the *Yi Zhou Shu* (逸周書) completed in

629; Northern Qi (550-577) ‘The Book of Northern Qi’ ( Běi Qí Shū – 北齊書), completed in 635; and Sui (581-618) ‘The Book of Sui ( Suí Shū – 隋書), completed in 656. These works, along with ‘The History of the Northern Dynasties’ (Běishǐ – 北史) compiled in 656, provide essential insights. For the Tang period (618-906), primary sources include ‘Tang shu’ or the *Old Book of Tang* (舊唐書), completed in 945, and a new version of the history of the Tang dynasty ‘the New Book of Tang’ (新唐書) compiled between 1044-1060 (Klyashtorny, 1964 : 6). We should also mention some works of Chinese historians such as *Zizhi Tongjian* (資治通鑑) or ‘*The Comprehensive Mirror to Aid in Government*’ compiled by the famous historiographer of the Sun era Sima Guang between 1066-1085. The study references well-known translations of the above-mentioned works including Liu Mau- Tsai’s German translations (Liu Mau-Tsai, 1958) and I. Bichurin’s ‘Collection of information about the peoples living in Central Asia’ (Bichurin, 1958) translated into Russian.

The second group of sources includes research by historians, Turkologists, Sinologists, archaeologists, and anthropologists who have studied Turkic-Chinese relations. In this sense, notable works include L.N. Gumilyov’s ‘Ancient Turks’ (Gumilyov, 1967), S.G.Klyashtorny’s ‘History of Central Asia and monuments of runic writing’ (Klyashtorny, 1964), ‘Inner Asian Frontiers’ by O. Lattimore (Lattimore, 1940), and ‘The perilous frontier: Nomadic Empires and China’ by T.Barfield (Barfield, 1992) and others. Contemporary scholars whose work contributed to this study include Ganiev R.T. (Ganiev, 2017), Khamzin I.R. (Khamzin, 2023) and others.

### Research background

The study highlights the complex relationship between the Turks and the Chinese Empire, emphasizing the importance of Chinese chronicles in studying the history of the Turks. Chinese chronicles are still the main source for studying the history of the Turks because they provide the most complete, detailed, and consistent information. This is in contrast to the Turkic runic inscriptions, which are unfortunately fragmented and incomplete. Western historians, as well as Chinese historical traditions, which base their research almost entirely on Chinese dynastic chronicles, cannot be completely objective about the history and life of nomadic states, which are referred to as «barbaric» in those chronicles.

Conversely, Russian, Soviet and contemporary Turkologists attempt to analyze Turkic history with greater balance and an appreciation for the unique aspects of Turkic culture, governance, and traditions. This approach incorporates the limited and fragmentary Turkic sources, such as runic inscriptions, with an eye toward interpreting them without preconceived notions. In their written monuments, the Turks use the term ‘tabgach’ for both the Chinese and the Sinicized Mongol tribes, likely because, by the time these monuments were written, there was no significant difference between them, and those Mongol tribes had fully assimilated with the Chinese. The frequent occurrence of this term in primary sources from the First and Second Turkic Khaganates (as well as other nomadic states of Central Asia) suggests not only

proximity but also significant interaction that likely influenced the trajectories of both the nomadic and imperial states.

### Analysis

The influence of Chinese culture on the Turks. This study explores the cultural relations between the Turkic Khaganate and medieval China, emphasizing the complexity of their interactions. While they were distinct in their values, lifestyles, worldviews, and cultures, their close contact from the beginning of the Khaganate led to mutual influence. The study focuses on the periods of the First and Second Turkic Khaganates, corresponding with the late Toba Wei dynasties, Zhou and Qi, the Sui dynasty and early Tang dynasty in Chinese history. Depending on the domestic policy of each individual ruler, the situation on the frontier also changed, which partly influenced cultural exchanges as well. Diplomatic relations between Turks and Chinese included not only military alliances and trade relations, but also one of the most common practices to strengthen alliances such as heqin (dynastic marriage) between children or relatives of the rulers, which could also foster cultural ties. In this article, the authors aim to systematically present the main aspects of cultural interaction and exchange between these two states.

Chinese culture had a notable impact on the Turkic ruling elite. Liu Mau-Tsai posited that the Turks' belief in divine succession might have been inspired by Chinese traditions of emperors drawing their authority from heaven (Liu Mau-Tsai, 1957: 190). He singles out the full designation of the title of Mojo (Kapagan) Kagan '*Son (of Heaven (t'ien-nan ), the holy, heavenly kagan T'u-kyue(Turks), who attained the reward of fruit (= vipâka) in heaven*', Chinese emperors also drew their power from heaven, worshipped heaven (Liu mau-tsai, 1957: 191). However, skepticism toward this idea arises from the traditional Turkic religious belief system, Tengrianism, where Heaven (Tengri) was their supreme deity.

V.V. Bartold writes about it: 'It is said about the cult of heaven and earth, and sometimes "Turkish sky" and "Turkish earth and water" are used. The same word tanpiri denotes heaven in the material sense and heaven as a deity. From those places where earth and water are mentioned (djar, sub), one can also conclude that earth and water as a single deity and not as a collection of spirits of the earth are meant' (Shaimerdinova, 2014: 65). I.L. Kyzlasov comes to the conclusion that the Turks practised monotheistic religion. He believes that the Orkhon-Yenisei monuments for the first time reveal to science the existence of monotheistic religion in early medieval South Siberia and north-western Mongolia. I.L. Kyzlasov notes that the Yenisei rock inscriptions associated with monotheism do not mention the name of the deity, and this, of course, is not accidental. In a number of different lines the deity is referred to as taniri – an ancient word, dating back to Turkic paganism, in which it meant the sky (Kyzlasov, 2001: 246).

Religion. It cannot be denied, however, that cultural exchange with China, particularly with the Qi dynasty, influenced the Turkic elite, including the spread of Buddhism. Buddhist

monks appeared at the Khan's court and converted Tobo Khan (Gumilyov, 1967: 32). However, according to Chinese sources, the Turkic elite had already been exposed to Buddhism during the reign of Mugan khagan. It can be assumed, based on Chinese sources, that the Chinese capital hosted a significant Turkic population, some of whom practiced Buddhism. In the late 550s, Emperor Xiao Ming Di 孝閔帝, founder of the Northern Zhou 北周 dynasty (557-581), ordered the construction of a Buddhist temple for the Turkic community (Liu Mau-Tsai, 1958: 38-39).

This act was intended not only to placate the Turks living in Chang'an 長安 but also to serve as a friendly political gesture towards Mugan khagan (木桿). The subsequent emperor Ming Di 明帝, commemorated the consecration of the temple with an inscription praising Muqan's virtues, including his supposed conversion to Buddhism. However, the authenticity of this claim is debated by many scholars, who argue that it reflects Chinese aspirations more than historical facts. After the death of Mugan khagan, Tobo khagan ascended the throne and, according to Chinese sources, he was converted to Buddhism by a monk named Huilin 惠琳. Tobo then built a Buddhist temple, and in 574, at Tobo Khagan's request, the Chinese emperor of the Qi dynasty sent him the *Parinirvaṇasūtra* (Niepan jing 涅槃經), translated from Chinese into Turkic (Porció, 2015: 19).

Further insights into Turkic religious life can be found in the work of Klashtorny and Lishvitz on the Bugut inscription, which notes that Taspar (Tobo) formally adopted Buddhism shortly after Emperor Wu-Di 宇文邕 of Northern Zhou began persecuting the religion in 574. The famous Indian missionary monk Chinagupta, fleeing persecution, spent ten years (574–584) among the Turks, successfully preaching Buddhism at the Kagan's court. During this period some sutras were translated into Turkic and recorded for Taspar.

Besides the Bugut inscription, another striking evidence of the influence of Buddhism on the Turkic elite of that time is *The Khüis Tolgoi inscription*, found in 1975, written in the Brahmi alphabet. The very fact that the Brahmi alphabet was used in the steppes of Central Asia is attested only during the First Turkic Khaganate. (link) The key point in the text of the monument is the mention of Niri Khaganate (587-599), but researchers doubt that the text itself was composed during his reign or on his order. Essentially he is the main protagonist of the narrative in the text, the second protagonist is a certain bodhisattva toroX qayan. (link) In Buddhism, a bodhisattva is someone who is on the path towards bodhi ('awakening') (Skilling, 2021). Researchers believe that this protagonist could be the ruler of the Uigur tribe under the First Turkic Khaganate – Pusa (菩薩), However, there is some inconsistency, since the title 'qayan' is mentioned in the text, which was never mentioned in the Chinese sources. It is assumed that even if he did not possess the title, he was self-proclaimed within the circle of his tribe (Maue, Ölmez, 2018: 80).

Taking the defeat of Niri by the Thiele as a historical point of reference, it seems that the The Khüis Tolgoi inscription marks the beginning of the Uyghur ascendancy among the Thiele tribes in the north. The Brāhmī script and Mongolian language may have been chosen in imitation of the imperial inscriptions of the First Turkic Khaganate (Bugut) (Maue, Ölmez, 2018: 80).

The inscriptions found in Eastern Kazakhstan (Tarbagatai) can also be mentioned. Three inscriptions, presumably belonging also to the First Turkic khaganate. D. Maue, examining these inscriptions, came to the conclusion that No. 1 and No. 3 were written in Brahmi language, No. 2 in a Bactrian script. Another interesting feature is a schematically embossed face with two pairs of eyes, which was a sign of special sagacity in the East and a point above the bridge of the nose (symbolic third eye), located on the right side of the inscription No. 1. The latter is probably also connected with the spread of Buddhist traditions. Baitenov E. studying these monuments comes to the conclusion that perhaps they were erected in honour of Taspar (Tobo) Kagan (Baitenov, 2012: 50)

According to Klyashtorny and Lishvitz, the rulers of the Khaganate viewed Buddhism as a universal form of religion that could help create an ideological community within their heterogeneous empire (Klyashtorny, Lishvitz, 1971: 125). However, after 581 AD, with the rise of the Sui dynasty in China and the defeat of Qi, the Turks became disillusioned with Buddhism (Gumilyov, 1967: 32).

During the Second Turkic Khaganate, after fifty years under the influence of Tang China, a new system of values emerged, proposed by Tonyukuk - a return to the original values of the nomads. However, sources point to the fact that Bilge Kagan at the beginning of his reign showed interest in Chinese cultural traditions and expressed a desire to adopt certain aspects, including plans to build cities and Buddhist temples, which were ultimately not realized (Porció, 2015: 23). Hostility towards China and Chinese cultural influence is also evident in the Orkhon monuments dedicated to Bilge Kagan and Kültegin. For example: *'They [the Chinese] give [us] gold, silver and silk in abundance. The speech of tabgachas is always sweet, and jewelry is soft. By seducing with sweet speech and luxurious jewelry, they strongly attracted to themselves the peoples living far away. Those, who settled close to them [the Chinese], then learnt bad wisdom there. The Tabgachas prevented the truly wise and brave men to come forward...'* (Barfield, 1992: 123).

Chinese products were an integral part of the daily life of the nomadic Turkic tribes. Firstly, they were received as tribute from the Chinese emperors, with payments reaching up to a devastating 100,000 pieces of silk, though these payments were briefly halted during Emperor Wen-Di's reign. Secondly, the territory of the Turkic Khaganate controlled key segments of the Great Silk Road facilitating trade and securing economic benefits for the region. The main Chinese imports included coins, mirrors, silk, etc. According to archaeological research, coins were relatively rare in cultural monuments and funerary complexes in South Siberia and Mongolia. A. Tishkin and N. Seregin suggest that Chinese coins were not just used as currency but also had a sacral function, serving as amulets. This can be evidenced by benevolent inscriptions found on individual specimens. Also, there is an assumption that Chinese coins might have also been used as decorative items on patches and pendants, though such finds in male burials are infrequent (Tishkin, Seregin, 2013: 55).

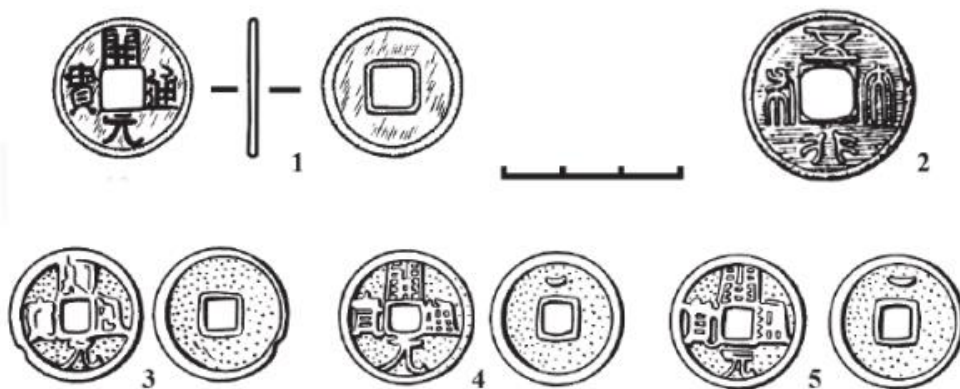


Fig.1. Coins from the burials of early medieval Turks. (Tishkin, Seregin, 2013: 51)

Mirrors. Metal mirrors or their fragments were found in 19 different Turkic monuments. They mostly date back to the 7th-9th century AD. The most widespread types are the Chinese round mirrors with a central bump-loop, surrounded by mythical animals amidst grapevines - an ornament popular across Central Asia to Vietnam. Outside of the Celestial Empire, eight-lobed mirrors also were found, with two examples discovered among Turkic cultural artifacts. The reverse side often featured depictions of the phoenix or qilin, while the outer ornamental field contained motifs of flying orioles and flowers (Tishkin, Seregin, 2013: 57). The use of mirrors was also of sacral nature, being part of funeral and memorial practices of nomads, symbolizing the high status of the deceased.

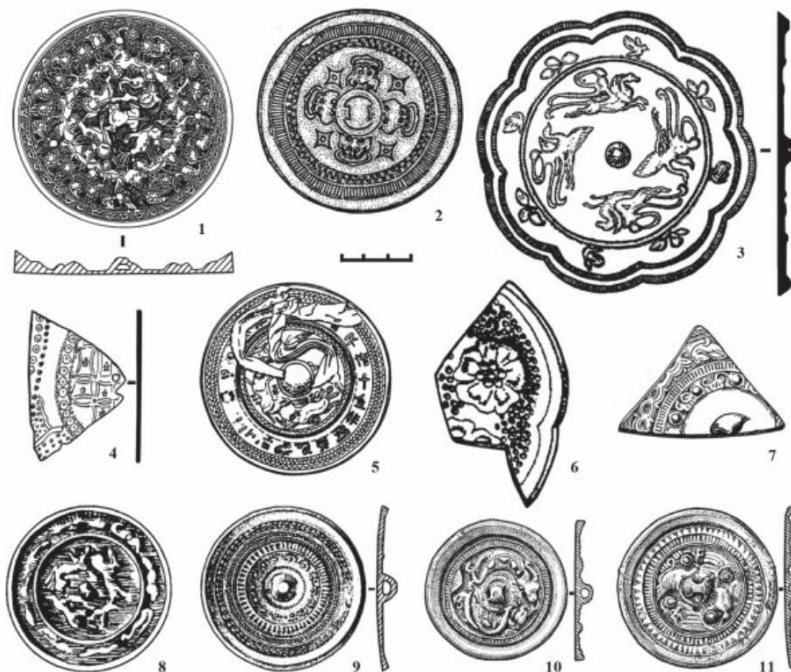


Fig.2. Metal mirrors found in the burials of early medieval Turks. (Tishkin, Seregin, 2013: 56)

Silk. Silk was the most widespread among the items of Chinese imports. While the Western Turks sold their silk in exchange trade, the Eastern Turks often used it for clothing. Liu Maotsai points to a historical story described in the Suishu 'When Zhangan Khagan in 607 appealed to Emperor Sui with a request to introduce Chinese costumes, his request was not satisfied'. This suggests that the Turkic elite of that era aspired to resemble the emperor's Chinese subjects, but they were advised to retain their traditional attire to signify their ethnicity (Liu Mau-Tsai, 1957: 197). Analyses of excavated materials from funerary complexes of early medieval Central Asian Turks show that Chinese goods represented a very important element of nomadic material culture. Chinese items held great value among nomads (Seregin, Chen, 2020: 185).

The Suishu indicates that Emperor Sui fulfilled the wish of Kimin (Zhangan) Kagan to build a Chinese-style castle with beams and rooms. It is noted that Kagan himself considered felt dwellings too primitive. Not only the castle itself, but also all the accessories were delivered to Zhangan's headquarters by the emperor (Liu Mau-Tsai, 1957: 198).

Chinese sources also describe the funeral rites of the Turks and how they evolved. Initially, the Turkic tribes (tü-kuye) practiced cremation during specific seasons. Later, they began burying the deceased and constructing burial mounds. The early Turks burned bodies on designated days with burial times determined by the greening or withering of plants, as they did not initially possess an annual calendar. Whether the twelve-year cycle for dating years, and dating in general, was their own invention or adopted through interactions with other nomadic groups or Chinese dynasties like the Northern Zhou, Northern Qi, and Sui remains uncertain.

However, sources mention the use of the Oriental calendar by the Turks, as exemplified by a letter from Sha-po-lue to Emperor Sui dated: 'Year of the Dragon (tec/z'e) (584), 9th month, 10th day' (Liu Mau-Tsai, 1957: 197). Initially, cremation was the custom, and only ashes were buried. By 628, however, Tang emperor Taizong 太宗 noted: 'It used to be customary for the Turks to burn corpses, but now they bury them and build burial mounds'. «This seems to have been influenced either by the nomadic Tele tribes or by the Chinese. N.N. Seregin believes the Chinese had an impact on Turkic burial practices (Seregin, 2014: 213).

Turkic influence. When examining Turkic cultural influence on China, it is essential to pay attention to the specific period and the dynasty under which this influence occurred. During the period under consideration, the Zhou and Qi dynasties were prominent at the height of the First Turkic Khaganate, while the Sui dynasty marked its decline. The Tang dynasty kept the Turkic tribes under its influence until the formation of the Second Turkic Khaganate, and later coexisted with it. Lev Gumilyov points out that the Toba Wei dynasty in northern China, along with its successor, the Zhou, were not ethnically Chinese, but rather Sinicized Toba tribes (Gumilyov, 1967: 11). This could partially explain the impact of foreign rule on the customs and daily life of northern China. The southern Chinese viewed themselves as the inheritors of ancient Han culture. They regarded northerners as having lost their literary ability and good manners, but adept in warfare, inconsistent in personal relationships, and



indifferent to etiquette. Women in northern China enjoyed greater freedom, handling legal matters, engaging in commerce, and asserting their rights in court. Southern writers critical of women's rights attributed this situation to the steppe traditions of the Toba Wei. Northerners preferred drinking yoghurt mixed with water instead of tea at court, mocking the tea drinking habits of the pampered southerners (Barfield, 1992: 116).

Unlike them, the Sui dynasty, which united a fragmented China, adhered or attempted to adhere to the Han tradition and retreat from any nomadic influence on worldview and lifestyle. According to Chinese sources and studies of that period, the Sui dynasty fell during the decline of the Turkic Khaganate. Emperor Wen Di hastened to take advantage of this situation by ceasing the annual tributes to the nomads, which typically included silk and other household items. However, the emperor soon realized that a policy of brute force was not ideal.

During the Sui Dynasty, cultural exchange between the Turks and the Chinese diminished but did not cease entirely. The policies of Wen Di and his successor Yandi, aimed to sow discord among the Turkic tribes, by supporting different sides through dynastic marriages, with tributes disguised as wedding gifts. Despite their efforts, the Sui emperors were unable to fully establish external relations with the nomadic tribes, and by the early 7th century AD the Tang dynasty had ascended, with Emperor Taizong taking the throne.

One of the brightest influential figures in Turkic-Chinese relations was Emperor Taizong, whom L. Gumilyov referred to as 'Tabgach Khan' and T. Barfield as 'Chinese Khagan'. Taizong prevented the Turkic tribes from consolidating into a state after their disintegration in 630, leading to a period of fifty years during which the Turks were effectively under Tang rule. This motif is often found in the Orkhon inscriptions: *'Those Begs who were in China took to themselves Tabgach [Chinese] titles and submitted to the Kagan of Tabgach [Chinese emperor]. For fifty years they gave him their labours and strength. They handed their empire and its laws to the Kagan of Tabgach. The whole mass of the Turkic people said thus: 'I was a people who had my empire. Where is my empire now? For whom am I mining the States?' They said: 'I was a people who had my Kagan. Where is my kagan now? To which Kagan do I give my labours and strength?' - they said. Thus, having said that, they became enemies of the Tabgach Kagan.'*

However, this period can be considered as the most vivid example of the Turks' influence on the Celestial Kingdom, particularly in areas such as music, poetry, clothing and values.

Music. Music held a significant place in the traditional Chinese worldview, and during the Tang period, intensive cultural communication with Turkic tribes was established, resulting in notable and mutual influence. Traditional Chinese sources emphasize the the substantial impact of Hu music, a term that, as noted by Liu Mau-Tsai, referred broadly to various 'barbarians', with particular emphasis on the Western Turks. The policies of Emperor Taizong (唐太宗, 627-649), who valued culture and the arts, contributed to significant developments in music, fostering the training of numerous musicians. Music during this period was not limited to the court but was enjoyed by the public as well.

Music in Tang China was categorized into two main types: Ya music (雅乐), ceremonial or court music performed during palace events and religious ceremonies; and Su music (俗乐),

folk music performed at all local ceremonies, theatres and in public spaces. There are clear differences between these two types of music (Öztürk, 2023:55). In the Tang era, orchestras were structured not by instruments but by the position of performers, divided into a standing section and a sitting section. The upper part of the hall featured the sitting section, and the standing section performs in the lower part of the hall. The standing section contains the musicians and dancers, with the musicians accompanying the dance to some extent. In the standing section, eight music systems are represented. They are: An music (安乐), Taiping music (太平乐), Pozhen music (破阵乐), Qingshan music (庆善乐), Dading music (大定乐), Shanyuan music (上元乐), Shengshou music (圣寿乐), and Guangsheng music (光圣乐). In contrast, the sitting section accompanied dance less frequently and comprised six systems: Yan music (宴/燕乐), Changshou music (长寿乐), Tianshou music (天授乐), Niaoge Wansui music (鸟歌万岁乐), Lunchi music (龙池乐), and Xiao Pozhen music (小破阵乐). Many of the instruments employed in these systems originated from Turkic musical traditions (Öztürk, 2023: 59).

Archaeological discoveries from Tang-era tombs in the western part of Anxi city revealed depictions of musicians seated on camels. One of the most notable artifact features a platform with intricate carvings, upon which an eight-person orchestra is seated. Seven male musicians of varying appearance sit on the four sides of the platform. They are dressed in *Hu* (Turkic) clothes with round collars and narrow sleeves. The height of the human figures is 12 cm. These musicians are holding sheng, xiao, pipa, shuqin and di musical instruments. A dancer, distinguished by her tied-up hair and red-painted face, stands at the platform's center, posed mid-performance (Öztürk, 2023: 62).

Turkic dancers and their music were integral to the Tang court's ceremonies and celebrations. According to Tang Shu, 'when Zhou Wu Di (周武帝, 561-578) married to a Gokturk princess (Turkic) origin, numerous envoys and musicians from regions like Qiuqi (Kucha), Shule (Kashgar), An (Bukhara) and Kan (Samarkand) came to Chang'an (the capital of the Tang Dynasty).' The Sui Shu noted the following: 'During the reign of Zhou Wu Di, a musician named Suzhi Po (苏祇婆) from Qiuqi (Kucha) came to China with a bride-to-be Gokturk of (Turkic) origin. This man accompanied a Gokturk bride to China. Proficient with the pipa (琵琶), Suzhi Po's skill in producing seven notes intrigued the Chinese, prompting him to explain that his family had passed down this knowledge for generations in the Turkic region. He replied as follows: My father is a famous musician in the Turkestan region (Turkic region). From father to son, from generation to generation, we have known these seven notes for a very long time. From then on, the seminote system, in which the Chinese took great interest, became a turning point in the development of Chinese music. This exchange marked a significant moment in Chinese music, influencing its development (Öztürk, 2023:65). Some sources refer to Suzhi Po as Sukup Akari, a musician of Kuchi origin, highlighting the Turkic contributions to Chinese culture (Liu Mau-Tsai, 1957: 200).

Beyond music and musical instruments, the romanticisation of felt dwellings, a Turkic tradition, found favor during the early Tang era. Both Liu Mau-Tsai and L. Gumilyov have

translated poems from the Chinese poet Bo Juyi that celebrate these dwellings. Liu Mau-Tsai pointed out that the practice of installing felt dwellings, especially in cold seasons was quite popular during the early Tang era.

Historians such as Liu Mau-Tsai and T. Barfield agree that during the reign of Taizong, nomadic culture permeated Chinese society. This influence extended to dress, genres of music and instruments, games that parodied the traditions of the Turks, and even the imperial court itself. A Taizong's son, Li Cheng-qian, exemplified this cultural blending; he favored Turkic customs, kept Turkic servants, and even spoke their language. He ignored accepted Chinese behaviour and used violence against anyone who insulted him. He was accused of behaviour unbecoming of an heir and was deprived of his Turkic servants. Thereafter, Li Cheng-qian observed the external forms of decency, but kept in the palace of the close Chinese who looked like Turks, and spoke the Turkic language. He erected a yurt in the courtyard, decorated with banners bearing the head of a wolf. Once, for entertainment, he staged a mock funeral for a Kagan, acting as the deceased while surrounded by mourners. Despite this, he continued to keep close Chinese associates who resembled Turks and maintained Turkic customs, longing for the freedom of the steppe life (Barfield, 1992: 118).

## Results

Among the aspects of cultural interaction identified during the research and analysis of the collected material, the following points can be highlighted:

The influence of Turkic culture on China was particularly noticeable in the aspect of music, musical instruments, dance and entertainment, especially during the early Tang period. The Sui dynasty records already indicate some musical genres and styles borrowed from Turkic tribes. Archaeological excavations of Tang tombs prove this. During the Sui dynasty, the primary channels of cultural interaction were through Chinese princesses given in marriage as part of the diplomatic tradition of dynastic marriage, which was widely practiced during this period.

However, during the reign of Emperor Taizong, especially in the years when the Turkic tribes were completely deprived of statehood for nearly half a century. the channels of cultural exchange expanded significantly. There was a tendency to set up felt tents in winter, wear 'nomadic' clothing, and play games that imitated nomadic traditions.

The cultural influence of early medieval China was extremely extensive. It especially affected the elite of the Turkic nobility. For instance, Tobo Kagan adopted Buddhism under the influence of the Chinese emperor. Although some scholars consider the spread of Buddhism, the sending of missionaries and the translation of Buddhist texts into the Turkic language as political maneuvers aimed at rapprochement and exerting influence on the Turkic court, it is impossible to overlook the significant impact this had. Additionally, Turkic funeral rites changed, gradually adopting Chinese practices. Beyond spiritual culture, material culture also spread through trade routes. Chinese imported goods such as silk, coins, and mirrors were widely used by the Turkic nobility, even functioning as a form of currency in the region.

## Conclusion

The cultural aspect of mutual influence in the Turkic-Chinese diplomatic ties of the early medieval period is a complex topic. Even during the formation of the First Turkic Khaganate, the Chinese Zhou Empire became the closest ally for the early Turks. Throughout the history of the Turkic Khaganate, the Chinese Empire continued to exert decisive influence. For the Chinese Empire, relations with their northern neighbours were also a cornerstone of foreign policy. These two regional hegemonies influenced each other to such an extent that some Western scholars believe that the ethnogenesis of the Turks is linked to the historical development of the Chinese Empire. It can be concluded that cultural exchange between the Turkic Khaganate and early medieval China enriched both cultures, transformed their arts, and had a broadly positive effect.

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### **Түркі қағанаттары мен Қытай империясы арасындағы мәдени ықпалдың негізгі аспектілері**

**Аннотация.** Мақалада Бірінші және Екінші Түркі қағанаттары мен Чжоу, Ци, Суй және ерте Тан әулеттері кезеңіндегі ерте ортағасырлық Қытай империясының өзара мәдени ықпалы зерттелген. Хронологиялық зерттеу объектісі ретінде мақала авторлары б.з. VI-VII ғасырларды қарастырады. Біздің дәуіріміздің VI ғасырында алғашқы түркі мемлекеті – Түркі қағанаты құрылды, ол тез арада Қытай империясы үшін маңызды геосаяси көршіге айналды, оның тарихи дамуы Қытай империясымен сыртқы саяси байланыстармен тығыз байланысты болды, өйткені ол қағанаттың өркендеу кезеңінде ең жақын одақтас, ал құлау кезеңінде ең зор қатер еді. Қытай мәдениетінің ықпалы қағанаттың алғашқы кезеңдерінен-ақ байқалады, ол дипломатиялық байланыстар мен тығыз сауда қатынастары арқылы іске асты. VII ғасырда Ежелгі түріктер жарты ғасыр бойы мемлекеттілігінен айырылып, Тан империясына бағынышты болды. Осыған қарамастан, дәл осы уақытта түркі мәдениетінің Қытай мәдениетіне ықпалы күшейе түскені көрінеді. Мәдениеттердің өзара ықпалы келесі салаларда байқалады: дін, түрлі дәстүрлер, өнер, музыка, материалдық мәдениет заттары, сәулет және т. б.

Түркі қағанаттары мен Қытай империясының рухани және материалдық мәдениеттерінің өзара ықпалын зерттеу мемлекеттер арасындағы дипломатиялық қатынастардың аспектілерін, олардың арасындағы сыртқы саяси вектордың даму себептерін жақсы түсінуге мүмкіндік береді.

Мақалада тарихи дереккөздерге талдау жасалды және археологиялық, антропологиялық материалдар пайдаланылды, жүйелі кешенді талдау әдістері қолданылды.

**Кілт сөздер:** Бірінші және Екінші Түркі қағанаттары, ерте ортағасырлық Қытай, мәдениеттердің өзара ықпалы, дипломатия, дін, өнер, түркі тарихы.

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### **Основные аспекты культурного влияния тюркских каганатов и Китайской империи**

**Аннотация.** В статье исследуется взаимное культурное влияние первого и второго тюркских каганатов и раннесредневековой Китайской империи периода династий Чжоу, Ци, Суй и ранней Тан. В качестве объекта хронологического исследования авторы статьи рассматривают VI-VII вв. н.э. В VI веке нашей эры сформировалось первое тюркское государство – первый тюркский каганат, который быстро стал важным геополитическим соседом для Китайской империи, историческое развитие которого было тесно связано с внешнеполитическими связями с Китайской империей, поскольку империя была ближайшим союзником как в период процветания каганата, так и самой серьезной угрозой в период его падения. Влияние китайской культуры прослеживается уже с ранних этапов истории каганата. В VII веке древние тюрки на полвека лишились своей государственности и подчинились империи Тан. Несмотря на это, именно в это время усиливается влияние тюркской культуры на китайскую. Взаимовлияние культур проявлялось в следующих сферах: религии, различных традициях, искусстве, музыке, предметах материальной культуры, архитектуре и др.

Изучение взаимовлияния духовной и материальной культур тюркских каганатов и Китайской империи дает возможность лучше понять аспекты дипломатических отношений между государствами, мотивы развития внешнеполитического вектора между ними.

В статье осуществлён анализ исторических источников, использованы археологические и антропологические материалы, а также использованы методы системного комплексного анализа.

**Ключевые слова:** первый и второй тюркские каганаты, раннесредневековый Китай, взаимовлияние культур, дипломатия, религия, искусство, история тюрков.

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