



**Satuk Bughra Khan:
First Turkish Muslim Monarchs
4th century Hijri/ 10th century AD**

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Received: 08/07/2025 Accepted: 19/10/2025 Published: 18/12/2025

Abstract: This research paper attempts to shed light on the conversion of the Turks in general to Islam, specifically focusing on the harbingers of the Uighur Turks' embrace of Islam and the circumstances surrounding it. The research seeks to understand the reasons behind openness of the Turks in general to Islam and their acceptance of it, despite the multitude of pagan beliefs and divine religions they encountered throughout their history.

It also aims to learn from this special relationship that arose between the Turks and Islam, particularly during the first half of the fourth century AH, which is the focus of this study. This was the time when Satuk Bughra Khan, the king of the Yagma tribe, embraced Islam, and all the members of his tribe followed suit.

This coincided with the establishment of a powerful Turkish kingdom, making it the first Muslim Turkish ruling family in Eastern Turkestan, also known by various names such as the Ali afrasiyáb, Khans of Turkestan, Ilak khans, and Qarakhanid. Upon embracing Islam, the Uighurs introduced two fundamental elements to the region: the Islamic religion and Uighur culture. Thus, little remained of the region's Buddhist or Nestorian Christian past. The rule of this dynasty extended from the middle of the fourth to the seventh century AH (10th to 13th century CE).

Keywords: Qarakhanid; Uyghür; Balasaghun; Samanides; Eastern Turkistan.

Résumé :

Ce document de recherche tente de se concentrer sur la conversion des Turcs en général à l'islam, en se concentrant spécifiquement sur les signes avant-coureurs de l'adhésion des Turcs ouïghours à l'islam et les circonstances qui l'entourent.

Ainsi que les raisons de l'ouverture des Turcs en général à l'islam et de leur acceptation de celui-ci, malgré la multitude de croyances païennes et de religions divines qu'ils ont rencontrées tout au long de leur histoire.

Il s'agit également de tirer des leçons de cette relation spéciale qui s'est développée entre les Turcs et l'islam, en particulier au cours de la première moitié du IV^e siècle de l'hégire, qui est au centre de cette étude. C'est à cette époque que Satok Bughra Khan, le roi de la tribu Yagma, a embrassé l'islam, et tous les membres de sa tribu ont fait de même. Cela a coïncidé avec l'établissement d'un puissant royaume turc, ce qui en a fait la première famille dirigeante turque musulmane du Turkestan oriental, également connue sous divers noms tels que l'Ali afrasiyáb, les Khans du Turkestan, les Khans Ilak et les Qarakhanides.



En adoptant l'Islam, les Ouïghours ont introduit deux éléments fondamentaux dans la région : la religion islamique et la culture ouïghoure. Ainsi, il restait peu de choses du passé chrétien bouddhiste ou nestorien de la région. Le règne de cette dynastie s'étendit du milieu du IV^e au VII^e siècle de l'Hégire (du Xe au XIII^e siècle).

Mots-clés : Qarakhanid ; Uyghür ; Balasaghun ; Samanides ; Turkestan Oriental.

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1.INTRODUCTION:

This short study aims to approach texts from historical sources to identify the closest to timeframe, and shed light on the beginnings and circumstances that led the Central Asian Turks to convert to Islam. and to reveal the depth of the relationship between the Islamic world and the Turkish peoples for a long time.

The end of the third and the beginning of the fourth centuries AH /9-10th AD, witnessed a fundamental cultural and civilizational shift in the history of the Turkic society in Central Asia. Important figures from this society converted to Islam, a significant development that deserves attention. Its first manifestation appeared when Yinal al-Saghir"ينال الصغير", or

“Yinal Küçük”, a leader of the Turkic tribes roaming north of Khwarezm "خوارزم", embraced Islam. However, his tribe objected and demanded that he abdicate if he persisted in his new faith, forcing Yinal to revert to his former religion in the 10th century ¹

In a similar vein, another prominent Turkic figure, Seljuk ibn Dokkak "سلجوق بن دقاق", embraced Islam and separated from the group of tribes to which he belonged. He led his tribe towards the south of the Syr Darya (Jaxartes River) and settled in Jand "جند", where the Muslims were exempted from paying tribute to the Turkic kingdoms²

Yet, the most impactful event in this context was the Islamization of the Yagma ياغما Turkic tribes, known as the Qarakhanids "القراخانية", in the region now known as Xinjiang or Chinese Turkestan, located in northwest China. The Chinese have controlled the region since the second half of the 18th century, and its inhabitants are known as Uyghur "أويغور"³ Muslim Turks. Before this period, the Uyghurs had a rich history and played a decisive role, particularly around the 4th century AH/10th century CE, in asserting their presence in Central Asia and giving it a Turkish character by establishing a strong independent kingdom.

Their history became intertwined with Islam from the 4th century AH/10th century CE onwards, when their leader Satuk Bughra Khan "ساتوق بغرا خان" embraced Islam. Additionally, the activities of Sufi roads played a significant role in the spread of Islam and its propagation, especially since they managed the affairs of regions relatively distant from the Islamic lands until the Uyghurs eventually fell under Mongol domination, like other



kingdoms in Central and Western Asia, between the 7th and 8th centuries AH/13th and 14th centuries AD.

The gradual conversion of the Turkish peoples to Islam between the 3rd and 4th centuries AH (9th -10th centuries CE) raises important historical and cultural questions. What were the key factors-political, social, and religious- that facilitated this transformation? How did interactions with the Islamic world shape the religious and social identity of the Turks particularly the Uyghur Turks and their Qarakhanids dynasty? Furthermore, to what extent did Islamic values align with the pre-existing values and ethical principles of Turkish society, and how did this compatibility influence the acceptance and integration of Islam into their way of life?

Among the most Important sources used to address this topic, we mention: El Kamel the book of Ibn El Athir "ابن الأثير" a historian who informed us about the Qarakhita tribute conversion to Islam. Furthermore, we refer to an important source which the study relies "Tadhkirat Asṭūrat Sātuq Bughra khān" تذكرة أسطورة "ساتوق بغرا خان" the book date back to the fifth century AH, which was published by M.F Grenard in january1900 the memory of the first Turkish Uyghur Muslim king.

In addition, Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Ja'far al-Narshakhi جعفر النرشخي (286-348 AH/899-959 AD), "Ta'rikh Bukhara" "تاريخ بخارى" and al Gardizi "الجرديزي" and his book "zein al akhbar" زين الأخبار "which date back to fifth century AH,

and other sources. However, what predominate this source is the characteristics of Turkish people, its inclinations and Ethics before they embracing Islam, and intersecting points with the components of Islamic culture, which made it possible for people to accept Islam. In addition to many References, journals and articles that are considered modern studies that we should draw upon in our research.

2. Factors Contributing to the Spread of Islam among the Turks:

Since the beginning of the 8th century CE, the Turkish people of Central Asia, with their nomadic tribes and civilized kingdoms, were in constant contact with the Muslim conquerors in the eastern regions of the Islamic frontiers. These interactions often involved both war and peace, especially after Islam had become established in the region beyond the Amu Darya River. The Syr Darya River served as a boundary between the two neighbours. At that time, the Turkic kingdoms adhered to their ancient beliefs and were resistant to any changes to their political and cultural status quo.

It seems that the primary feature that distinguished Islam from other religions was its unique ability to combine material and intellectual culture. This aspect made it appealing to others, particularly to educated people, which is highlighted by two key factors:

2.1. Commercial activity:

It is clear that interaction through trade was the primary catalyst for the spread of Islam in that region. The call to Islam



had begun as early as the Umayyad era, albeit with limited success. In this context, the historian Barthold argues that the widespread acceptance of Islam among the Turks of Central Asia was largely due to Muslim scholars and missionaries, rather than official Abbasid embassies, the embassy of Ibn Fadlan "ابن فضلان" in 309 AH, which did not achieve the same level of success. Despite viewing Islam with respect from the beginning, the Turks did not consider it fundamentally different from other beliefs, such as Nestorian Christianity⁴ or other religions, which they considered incompatible with their nomadic lifestyle⁵.

At the same time, the nomads of Central Asia were constantly in need of goods from the civilized world, particularly clothing. So, they sought out markets wherever they were established—whether in China, Russia, or within the Islamic world—to acquire fabrics and garments. Conversely, trade with the nomads was highly profitable for the civilized Muslims, who could obtain meat and livestock feed at reasonable prices⁶.

Despite the fact that the border regions of north-eastern Central Asia were areas of military preparedness and constant clashes during the Samanid⁷ era, they were also bustling commercial hubs where Muslim and Turkish merchants exchanged various goods. This is evident in the descriptions of the renowned traveller and geographer Ibn Hawqal "ابن حوقل" (d. 367 AH), who highlighted the extensive trade between the two sides. Muslims sought to acquire livestock, such as sheep, goats, camels, and donkeys, from the fertile pastures of the Oghuz and Karluk Turks, while the Turks obtained clothing and other goods

from Khurasan خراسان. Moreover, the Turks were renowned for their exceptional slaves, highly prized for their beauty and skills. Their value could reach three thousand dinars, surpassing even Roman slaves and concubines. These slaves were skilled in various arts. Among their skills is playing instruments with ***“brilliant flair and proper performance, and from this kind are a lot in the houses of Al Saman and in those of the leaders of Al Khorasan”***⁸.

It is further evidenced by Ibn Fadlan’s ابن فضلان⁹ account of the Turks’ great desire for clothing manufactured in Islamic lands. Such garments were among the most valuable gifts a Muslim traveling merchant could offer in their territories. When a Muslim merchant entered the lands of the Oghuz Turkish tribes, he was required to stay with a friend from Turkestan. This friend would provide him with a ‘Muqabbab’ الْمُقَبَّب, a dwelling resembling a domed tent. The Muslim merchant would bring gifts for them, most importantly a robe for his host and a veil for his wife. This veil was a type of silk face covering for women, decorated with gold and jewels on the edges¹⁰.

These exchanges were essential for the Turkic nomads, who travelled to the border towns without waiting for Muslim merchants to visit them in the Asian steppes. As they became accustomed to Muslim products and lifestyles, they were influenced by both the religious and cultural aspects of Islam. Embracing Islam became a means for the nomads to integrate into this new world and participate in its benefits¹¹.

2.2. Moral factor:



The second factor contributing to the Turks' inclination towards Islam was the moral factor; Islamic teachings aligned with fundamental moral principles already present in Turkish society before the adoption of Islam. These were traits that the Turks held dear, such as chastity, disdain for moral corruption, and a deep reverence for legitimate family relationships. Adultery was considered a heinous crime and was punishable by death. Ibn Fadhlān described the punishment among the Oghuz Turks, the largest and most widespread Turkic tribe, where the offender would be tied to two tree branches, which were then released, tearing the person in half ¹² Similarly, homosexuality was considered a grave crime punishable by death for a Turk, while a foreigner would pay a fine and be expelled ¹³.

One of the shared moral values that fostered mutual affinity between the Turks and the Arabs was their tradition of honoring guests. Both cultures highly valued hospitality, and Islam's emphasis on this virtue likely attracted the Turks. Ibn Hawqal ابن حوقل, in his mid-fourth-century journey, observed that the Turks were known for their generosity and hospitality. They welcomed strangers with open arms and made them feel at home. The Turks would compete to host guests and would go to great lengths to provide hospitality, regardless of whether they knew the guest or expected any reward. They did so out of generosity and would often prepare spacious houses specifically for guests ¹⁴.

According to the historian Barthold, the trajectory of Ibn Fadlan's embassy reveals that Islam had a greater and easier influence on regions located farther away from Islamic lands

than on those that were closer. Ibn Fadlan encountered Turkish people who had adopted Islam in lands situated between Khwarazm and the lands of the Bulgars "بلاد البغار" (east and north of the Caspian Sea). These people had retained some of their shamanistic beliefs, such as placing stones on the graves of their warriors, corresponding to the number of their kills in battle, as a tribute to their heroics. It is noteworthy that the Turkic people inhabiting Central Asia during this period exhibited varying levels of civilization. Some groups were still making their arrows from bones and did not possess iron weapons¹⁵.

The Bulgar Turks are a prime example of a people with a unique culture, characterized by sensitivity and a receptiveness to Islam. Yaqut al-Hamawi "ياقوت الحموي" informs us that during the reign of the Umayyad Caliph Hisham هـشام بن هـبـد الملك (105-125 AH/724-743 CE), an Arab embassy was sent to a Turkic kingdom, the name and location of which have not been specified, nor has the route taken by this Umayyad embassy been identified. The khaqan خاقان displayed his military might before the Umayyad ambassador, stating that these soldiers were not skilled in any craft other than fighting and bearing arms. They were neither artisans nor did they possess any profession that they could pursue if they were to embrace Islam and adhere to its laws¹⁶.

The military character that distinguished the Turks was one of the most important factors in the spread of Islam. Islam, on one hand, encouraged the learning of horsemanship and combat skills, and on the other hand, promoted the concept of jihad and the rewards it promised in the afterlife, such as paradise. The spread of Islam among the Turks was also linked to the individual efforts of Muslim Sufis. The biographies of



renowned Sufi figures reveal that they converted large numbers of Turks in the steppes of Central Asia. They achieved remarkable success and continue to do so to this day, surpassing other preachers, scholars, and imams. In their call to Islam, Sufis focused on the ugliness of sins, the punishment that awaits sinners in Hell, rather than on jihad and the pleasures of paradise. In essence, Sufi shaykhs had an unparalleled influence and continue to roam the steppes of Central Asia in large numbers to this day¹⁷.

2.3. The Samanids' Efforts in Spreading Islam in Eastern Turkestan:

Our knowledge of the specifics of Islam's spread in this region remains scarce and imprecise. However, it is evident that the Samanids السامانيون played a significant role. They implemented a new policy towards the Turkic nomads, abandoning the construction of defensive walls that had previously protected them from nomadic raids. This was due to their newfound power (see map n.2), which allowed them to exert greater control over the region. Turkestan was essentially under their complete control from the reign of Ismail ibn Ahmad al-Samani إسماعيل ابن أحمد الساماني (279-295 AH/892-907 AD)¹⁸.

According to Samanid historians, Prince Abd al-Malik sent scholars and missionaries to the Turkic people. One such figure was Abu al-Hasan Mahmud ibn Sufyan al-Kalmati al-Nisaburi أبو الحسن محمود ابن سفيان النيسابوري, who left Nishapur نيسابور in 340 AH/951-952 AD and served the Samanids in

Bukhara بخارى for several years. He later served the Khan of Khans "خان الخانات" and died at his court before 350 AH/961 AD, a period that coincides with the mass conversion of the Qara Khitai القاره خطائين or Uyghur Turks to Islam. Al-Kalmati undoubtedly played a role in this event¹⁹.

The Samanid's role in spreading Islam among the Eastern Turks was evident through their charitable and military establishments, as well as their encouragement of commercial and scientific activities. Al-Qarshi القرشي mentioned that Prince Nasr ibn Nuḥ نصر ابن نوح الساماني focused on winning over the Turks to Islam using these methods. Abu al-Hasan Sa'id ibn Hatim al-Asnikafi الأسنيكافي سعيد بن حاتم was one of the active figures in promoting Islam in the region, beginning his activities there before 380 AH/990 AD. Regarding the political relations between the Samanids and the Turks, we see in the 9th and the first half of the 10th centuries how they deployed their army in the Turkic steppes beyond the Syr Darya. According to al-Qarshi, Isfijab اسفيجاب -situated to the east of the city of Tashkent- was conquered at that time by Nuḥ ibn Asad al-Samani. Furthermore, Prince Ismail al-Samani conquered Taraz طراز, and Nasr al-Samani managed to conquer Ferghana فرغانة and seize one of its largest villages, Shawghar شاوغار. The widest military confrontation between the two parties occurred in 292 AH/904 AD when the western region of Transoxiana was attacked by the Turks. Ismail ibn Ahmad al-Samani اسماعيل بن احمد الساماني sought the help of the Caliph's army to confront the Turkish threat²⁰.

3. The International Situation and Powers in the Region During the Rise of Satuk Bughra Khan:

At that time, the Samanids were the masters of Transoxiana ما وراء النهر. They were preoccupied with their conflicts in Khorasan



and aspired to expand and dominate there. They paid little attention to the northern and eastern lands inhabited by nomads, including the Turks and others. Their historians, such as Narshakhi or El kardizi الكرديزي, did not delve into the details of the events occurring in those regions. Meanwhile, the Chinese had lost much of their military power, which had been renowned during the early Tang dynasty أسرة تانغ (618-907 AD). They were isolated from the north-western regions, especially after the emergence of the Uyghur confederation to the north and the Tibetan Kingdom to the south. The Chinese were thus forced to defend China from the threats posed by these neighbours, who had become a significant danger to them and their capital. This was a stark contrast to earlier periods when these people had been subordinated to China. It is worth noting that the princes of the Bughra Khan controlled all of Semirechiye (the Ili River basin) and Kashgar²¹ كشغر.

According to the author of *Hudud al-Alam* حدود العالم, the Yaghma kingdom—the homeland of Satuk Bughra—was situated on both sides of the Ighrag Art passes in the central and western Tian Shan mountains جبال تيان شان and controlled the regions of Khatalam ختلان, Narin نارين, and the north western part of what is now known as Chinese Turkestan (see Appendix N°1). After a conflict between China, the Karluks الفارلوق, and the Yaghma, the latter were able to settle in this region, and the king of the Yaghma held the title of “Bughra Khan”, meaning Khan of the Camel, he was also been known as “Qara Khan”, i.e. Black Khan²².

4. The Biography of Satuk Bughra Khan and his Conversion to Islam:

Satuk Bughra²³ Khan, whose Islamic name was Abd al-Karim, was one of the most famous kings of the Ilāk Khans إيلاك خان. He was the first prince of this dynasty to embrace Islam and spread it throughout the vast Qarakhanid. However, little reliable information has reached us about his reign or his conversion, except for a small amount from limited sources such as Jamal al-Qirshi's جمال القرشي "History of Kashgar", which dates back to the 5th century AH/11th century CE and was published by the orientalist Barthold, who specialized in the history of Central Asian Turks. There are also scattered references in Ibn Athir's ابن الأثير "Al-Kamil fi al-Tarikh" and his biography known as "Tadhkirat Asṭūrat Sātuq Bughrakhān", which was published by Grenard²⁴.

Ibn al-Athir calls him "Shabaq Qara Khan" شبق قاره خان, and thus "Shabaq" is likely a misspelling of "Satuk". It is said that he controlled the lands of Turkestan, including Kashgar²⁵, Balasagun بىلاساغون, Khotan خوتان, Taraz طراز, and other neighbouring lands beyond the river (see appendix 1). After him, his sons, the Turkic Khanate kings who inherited him, held these lands and were Muslims. A famous story about his conversion to Islam states that "he saw in a dream a man descending from the sky who said in Turkic, 'Embrace Islam and you will be safe in this world and the hereafter'. So he embraced Islam in his dream, and when he awoke, he declared his Islam"²⁶.

Satuk, the leader of the Yaghma tribe, belongs to the Oghuz Turks. Sharaf al-Zamān al-Marwazi شرف الزمان المروزي, the physician, informed us that the Oghuz tribes are among the great Turkic tribes, and they are twelve tribes. Some call them the Dokuz Oghuz, meaning the "Nine Oghuz". Some of them are



civilized and live in cities, while others are nomads who dwell in the steppes and deserts in yurts. Their lands border those beyond the river and the lands of Khwarazm. Upon their proximity to the lands of Islam, some of them converted and were called Turkmen. Not only that, but they also engaged in wars and fought against other non-Muslim Turks²⁷.

Islamic chronicles indicate that the Yaghma tribe defeated the powerful Karluk tribe and captured their capital Balasagun/Qara Ordū, located west of Lake Issyk Kul (El Tousi Nizam el Mulk نظام الملك, Siasset nameh:258). They had a system of two rulers or kings: the Khan خان or Khaqan خاقان, as mentioned in Islamic sources, whose capital was Balassagun, and the second Khan, who was subordinate to the first and resided in Talas طلاس or Kashgar. These rulers maintained military relations and significant trade with their Samanid neighbours along the southern borders. Regarding the conversion of the Karluk Khans to Islam, the historian Barthold relies on the earliest accounts, those attributed to Jamal al-Qirshi in his book "History of Kashgar". Qirshi mentions that the first person from the Yaghma tribe to convert to Islam was their leader, Satok Bughra Khan, who died in 344 AH/955 CE. He was the great-grandfather of the second actual conqueror of Bukhara²⁸.

Ibn al-Athir mentioned that around the year 349 AH (960 CE), 200,000 Turkish tents embraced Islam (Ibn Al Athir, El kamel:167). This is similar to what the Damascene historian Imad al-Din al-Hafiz عماد الدين الحافظ mentioned in the events of 349 AH, about the conversion of one hundred thousand Turkish yurts, or tents, to Islam. Since then, they have been known as

“Turkmen” ترکمان, which was originally “Turk Iman” ترک "ایمان" (Turk faith), but the word was later shortened²⁹.

The defining historical event marking the beginning of their kingdom was their victory over the Karluks and the conquest of Balasagun before 943 AD. Subsequently, they annexed Uzgen, which became one of the most important centers of the Qarakhanid. They, thus, completed their domination over the entire route from Khotan in the south to Kashgar in the north. Satuk Bughra Khan died in 344 AH (955 AD), and his shrine still exists today in Artush أرطوش, in Kashgar villages, and it is still visited and revered³⁰.

When the Qara Khanid Turks settled in the southwestern region of Kashgar, and the Ili and Issyk Kul areas, they brought about a profound transformation in the region³¹. This was due to their conversion to Islam, which added the Islamic religion to the Turkification of the region. Little remained of the region's past, whether Buddhism, Nestorian Christianity المسيحيين النساطرة, or any other belief, except for rare remnants. This dynasty ruled the region from the mid-4th century AH/10th century AD to the 7th century AH/13th century AD³².

Satuk is considered the patron and overseer of the spread of Islam among his people. Throughout the 10th and 11th centuries, all the western oases of the Tarim Basin حوض التاريم, the Tchu Valley, and Talas were under his authority. He divided the administration among his family members who had also converted to Islam. They established Kashgar as their capital³³.

As for the biography that has reached us, known as the “Tadhkira of Bughra Khan”³⁴ and published by Grenard, it is undoubtedly built on a legendary foundation. It is clearly a mixture of facts and fiction, making it difficult to rely on its accuracy. However, it also undeniably contains elements of truth



that deserve scrutiny. One such element is the story that on the night of the Prophet's ascension to heaven, while riding on Buraq البُرَاق, he saw a person he did not recognize among the prophets. He asked the angel Gabriel who this prophet was, and Gabriel told him that he was not a prophet but rather the spirit of Satuk Bughra Khan, who would descend 333 years after the Prophet's death to bring all of Turkestan into the fold of Islam. The legend states that the Prophet was very pleased with this news³⁵.

Regarding the Samanid role in the conversion of the Qarluq Uyghurs to Islam, the source states that Abu Nasr Samani أبو نصر الساماني was instrumental in the conversion of Satuk, the Sultan of the Turks, to the right path. Abu Nasr was a pious and devout man, well-versed in religious sciences and state administration. He chose to be active in trade, using it as one of his methods to spread Islam in Turkic lands and among their subjects. Beyond trade, he dedicated all his wealth and its returns to establishing charitable foundations and endowments for the propagation of Islam³⁶.

The legend states that Abu Nasr saw the Prophet Muhammad in a dream, who asked him to go to Turkestan, where Prince Satuk Bughra Khan would be waiting for him to embrace Islam. Abu Nasr Samani set off with his two sons and a caravan of 300 people. Meanwhile, Satuk, the son of the ruler of Kashgar, had reached the age of twelve. His birth was marked by extraordinary events, as the earth shook and springs erupted, even though it was winter, and the plains and gardens were

covered in flowers³⁷. The narrative adds that it was Al-Khidhr الخضر who informed Satuk of the coming of a righteous man who would guide him to the right path. A few days later, Satuk met the Samanid prince, Abu Nasr, and was convinced that he was the man Al-Khidr had foretold, and he embraced Islam from him³⁸

The same source narrates that Prince Satuk's father died when he was five years old, and his uncle Harun became his guardian until he came of age and assumed the leadership of the tribe. Harun opposed Satuk and tried to force him to abandon Islam and participate in the construction of a pagan temple. However, Satuk resisted and remained steadfast in his faith. Not only that, but instead of building a pagan temple, he built the first mosque in Kashgar. It seems that Satuk tried to get rid of his uncle Harun, who refused to embrace Islam. At this point, the legend intervenes with an exaggerated tale, claiming that the earth swallowed Harun for refusing to embrace Islam, thus making Satuk king of the Yaghma tribe and allowing him to spread Islam among them. Amidst this exaggeration and storytelling, Satuk is attributed to fantastic feats in spreading Islam and fighting the resistant Turks. These include exhaling fire during battles and his sword miraculously growing to forty cubits long in his battles against the infidels³⁹.

When Satuk reached the age of 96, his fame had spread far and wide, instilling fear among his enemies. Thanks to his sword, Islam had entered the realm of the Turks, from Kashgar in the north to Kara-koram قورام in the south (see Appendix).

His military campaigns had also reached the borders of China, and he had spread Islam in Turfan. However, illness prevented him from continuing these campaigns, so he returned to Kashgar where he died and was buried in the village of Artych - the present-day location, north of Kashgar. Satuk left behind



four sons: Hasan, Ijjan, Husayn حسن ايجان حسين, and Yusuf Qadr Khan يوسف قدر خان, as well as four daughters. After his death, delegations continued to arrive to seek the approval and allegiance of Satuk's sons⁴⁰.

Despite their conversion to Islam, the Qarluq Khanids did not forget their ancient and inherited conflict with the Persians. This influenced their relationship with the Samanids in Transoxiana, who represented the Sunni power in the region and were a force to be reckoned with. Military campaigns to expand at the expense of the Samanids became more frequent, especially targeting the fertile and attractive lands of the Syr Darya basin.

This was one of the main reasons for the downfall of Samanid rule in Transoxiana at the end of the 4th century AH. It began with a campaign by Harun Hasan Bughra Khan هارون حسن بخارا خان, who captured Bukhara, the capital of the Samanids, in 389 AH/992 CE for a period. Then, Arslan Ilek ارسلان ايلك Qarluq, in alliance with Sultan Mahmud محمود الغزنوي of Ghazna غزنه, finally captured it in 396 AH/1006 CE and declared their full allegiance to the Abbasids⁴¹.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

The gradual Islamisation of the Turkic peoples neighbouring the Islamic Caliphate was the result of sustained intercultural interaction, encompassing both diplomatic exchanges and military encounters. Among the most consequential outcomes of this interactions was the Uyghur Turks. Several factors contributed to this process, including the appeal of Islamic civilization as a source of administrative, legal, and economic models suitable for sedentary and semi-nomadic societies, as

well as a perceived moral and spiritual consonance between Turkic cultural values and Islamic teachings⁴².

A particularly transformative moment occurrent with the conversion of Satuk Bughra khan, a prominent leader of the Uyghur community, in the early 4th century AH (10th century CE)⁴³, His adoption of Islam had a significant ripple effect across Eastern Turkistan, owing to the Uyghurs' demographic strength and growing political influence. Satuk Bughra khan's conversion provided a compelling precedent that encouraged the Islamization of other Turkic polities.

The narrative describing Satuk Bughra Khan's conversion to Islam, as recorded in the *Thadhkirat*, is largely hagiographical rather than historical. It blends factual elements with legendary motifs such as prophetic dreams, the intervention of al-khidr, and miraculous punishments of unbelievers. These features reflect the influence of later Sufi and popular religious tradition, composed several centuries after Satuk's lifetime. Earlier historians like al-narshakhi, al-Kardizi, and Ibn el Athir mention the Islamisation of the Turks but omit such miraculous details, indicating that the *Tadhkira* evolved to sanctify the Qarakhanid dynasty and to present Islam's spread in Turkistan as divinely ordained. Therefore, this account should be read symbolically, as a reflection of collective memory and spiritual identity rather than as a literal historical record.

4. CONCLUSION

The relationship that developed between the Turkic communities neighbouring the lands of the Islamic Caliphate, as a result of interactions during both peace and war, led to the conversion of the Uyghur Turks. A combination of factors contributed to this, including the civilizational and economic elements that the nomadic Turks needed, as well as moral



compatibility.

The conversion of Satuk Bughra Khan, the leader of the Uyghurs, had the greatest impact on Eastern Turkestan due to their large numbers and growing power at the beginning of the 4th century AH. This was a significant and influential event for the other people of the region and served as a precedent for the conversion of leaders of other Turkic tribes, such as the Qarakhanids when their leader, Seljuk ibn Dukkaq, embraced Islam. This had a long-lasting impact on the course of relations between East and West.

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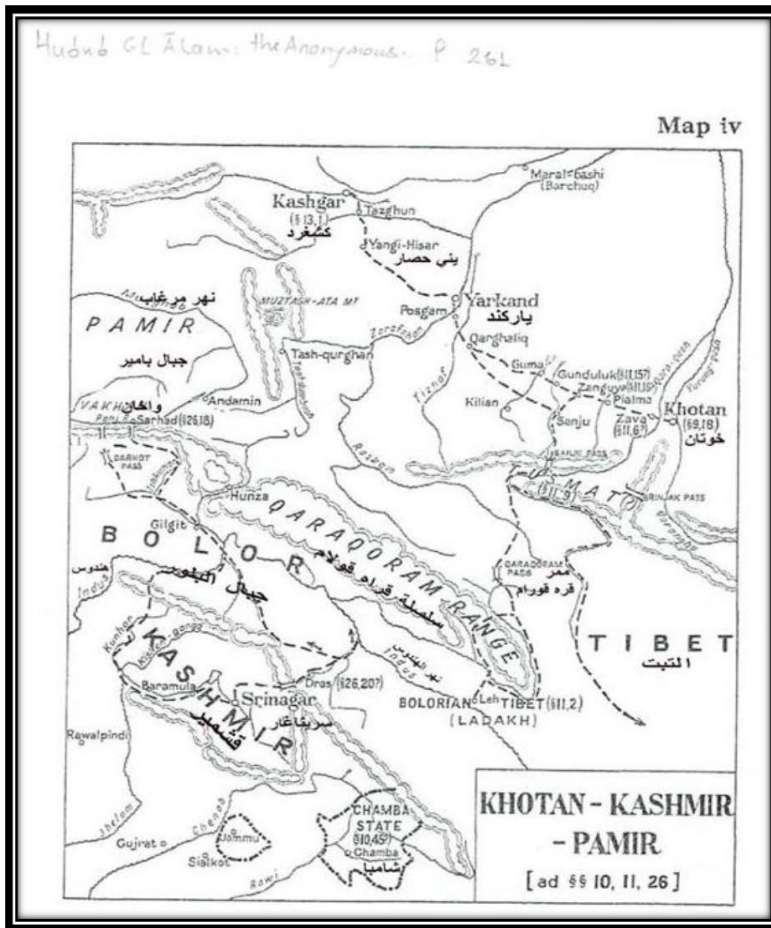
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3- Appendices

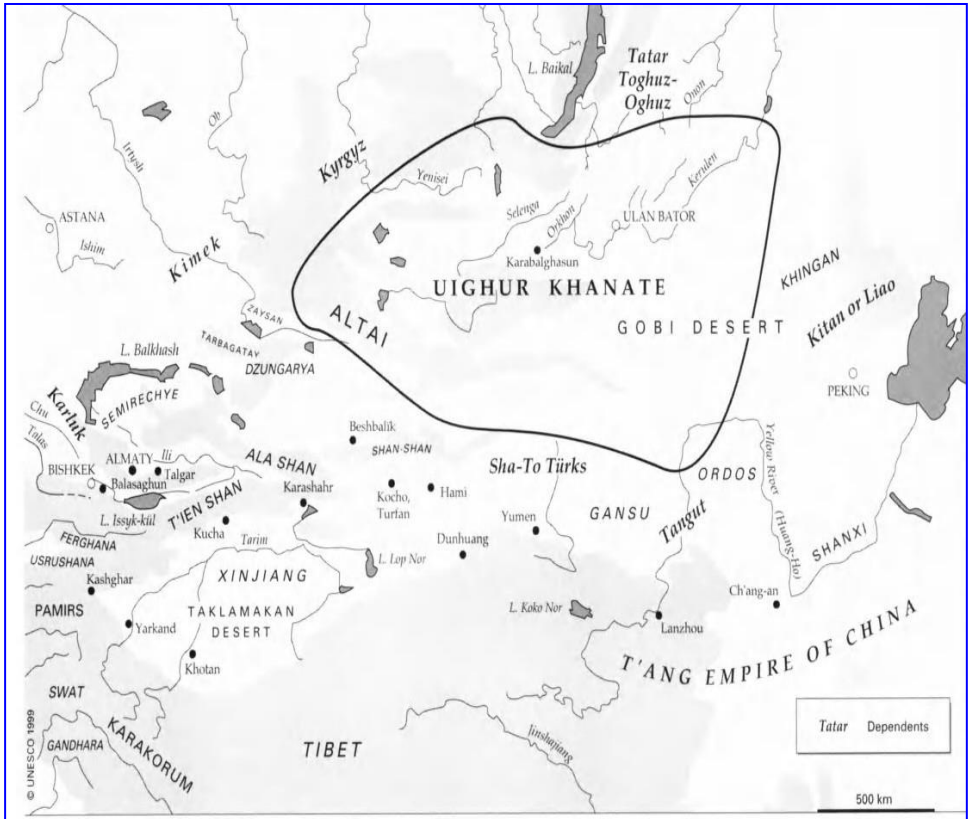
Map 1. ((Central Asia; Kashgar,Pamir,Karakouram, Bolor))



Anonymous: Hudud el ÂLAM, the regions of the world, P .261

Map 2.

Central Asia in the Samanid in the fifteenth century



Bosworth, C.E, History of civilizations of central Asia/ P.623



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¹ - IBN FADHLAN, *La Relation ;Rissalet ibn Fadhlān fi wasf el rihla ila bilad el Turk oua l'khazar oua el rouss oua sakaliba 309AH/921AD*, Sami el dahan, edition el Hachimia, Damas, 1960, PP103,97-98

² -BARTHOLD.W,*Turkestan down the Mongol invasion*, second edition,translated by the author with the assistant of H.A.R. Gibb, Oxford University press,London,1928,P.257.

³ . **Uyghur/ouïghour/Uyghūr** is a name currently given to the inhabitants of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region in China, numbering around 6 million. The term “Russian Uyghurs” is also used for a group of people numbering around 227,000. This name is derived from one of the oldest Turkic people who lived in the Mongolian steppe in the 8th century AD, and possibly even earlier, as early as the 6th century AD. They emerged amid the struggles of nomadic tribes for dominance over the Mongolian plateau, where they were prominent members of two rival confederations: the first was the Toghuz Oghuz, which included nine Turkic tribes, one of which was the Uyghurs; and the second was known as Kao-che, whose members mostly inhabited the forests of the Altai Mountains and the western Siberian steppes. Despite their victory within the Toghuz Oghuz in establishing an empire in the steppes in 552 AD, they failed to transition from a nomadic lifestyle to a centralized civil system. The Uyghur tribe was the most fickle ally throughout the period of the Gok-Turk Khaganate (First Khaganate 552-630 AD, and Second Khaganate 680-744 AD), often siding with the enemies of the Gok-Turks if it did not serve their interests. Finally, they seized the opportunity of the collapse of central authority in 743 AD to become masters of the Mongolian steppe in 744 AD. In 840 AD, they were expelled from Mongolia and took refuge in Chinese Turkestan, adopting Islam as their religion. The Uyghurs embraced Sunni Islam and were among its most devoted adherents. Like other Turkish people of Central Asia, they were influenced by Sufi orders, particularly the Naqshbandi order, which reached its peak, especially during the era of Timur Lenk and the centuries that followed. For more information, see: Moses L. W: « **Uyghur** » in Encyclopaedia of Islam, Vol 4, pp. 1504-1505-1506; Jean Sellier et André Sellier, (2006), Atlas des peuples D'orient, Moyen-orient caucase. Asie centrale, La Découverte, Paris :164-166.

⁴ - Roux, Jean Paul, 1997, P.217

⁵ - Barthold, *Turkestan*, P.255.

⁶ -Barthold, *Histoire des Turcs D'Asie centrale*, adaptation française : M. Donskis, Librairie d'Amérique et d'Orient, Adrien Maisonneuve, Paris, 1945, P.58

⁷ - **A noble Persian family, originally from Balkh, descended from a man named “Saman Khuda”**, a Persian phrase meaning “King of Saman”. They were named Samanids after a village north of Samarkand, which their ancestor is said to have founded. Their lineage is traced back to the famous Persian commander Bahram Chobin. Saman Khuda was forced to flee Balkh and seek refuge with the governor of Khorasan, Asad ibn Abdullah al-Qushayri, who helped him against his enemies. Saman Khuda then embraced Islam. His descendants played a significant role in the history of the Eastern Caliphate, starting from the reign of al-Rashid when they supported him during a crisis. Al-Ma'mun appointed them to govern Samarkand, Ferghana, and Bukhara. The Samanid dynasty eventually fell, and the Turkic Qarluq Khanate conquered Transoxiana in 389 AH (992 CE) through an alliance between Mahmud of Ghazni, the ruler of Khorasan, and the Turkic Khan Abu Nasr Muhammad ibn Ali, also known as Shams al-Dawla. The last Samanid ruler, Abd al-Malik ibn Nuh, was exiled, and the Qarluq Khan established his capital in Bukhara. For more details, refer to: Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Ja'far al-Narshakhi (286-348 AH/899-959 AD), Ta'rikh Bukhara, translated and edited by Badawi Ambin Abdul Majeed and Nasr Allah Mubashir al-Tarazi, 3rd edition, Dar al-Ma'arif, Cairo, 1993, pp. 90-91; and Ibn Athir: al-Kamil fi al-Tarikh, 1987, revised by Muhammad Yusuf al-Daqqaq, Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyah, Beirut, Lebanon, 1st edition, vol. 8, p. 5.

⁸ - Ibn Hawqal el našibi, Sorat el Ardh, Dar mektebet el Hayet, Beyrou, liban, 1992, P.376-377

⁹ . Like the embassy of Ibn Fadlan in 309 AH, where one of the tasks entrusted to him by the Abbasid Caliph al-Muqtadir Billah Ja'far al-Abbas was to deliver the **“Book of Warning to the Two Holy Sanctuaries”** to the King of the Khazar Turks. In this book, the Khan was invited to Islam. (Ahmad ibn Fadlan ibn al-Abbas ibn Rashid ibn Hammad: Ibn Fadlan's Epistle Describing a Journey to the Lands of the Turks, Khazars, Rus', and Slavs, in the year 309 AH/921 CE, 1960, edited and annotated by Sami al-Dahhan, al-Hashemi Press, Publications of the Arab Scientific Society in Damascus, p. 103.

¹⁰ -Ibn Fadhlān, la Relation, P.95

¹¹ -Barthold, *Histoire des Turcs*, P.58.

¹² - Ibn Fadhlān, op.cit ,P.93

¹³ - Ibn Fadhlān, op.cit, P.96-97

¹⁴ - Ibn Hawqal, op.cit, P.386-386

¹⁵ - Barthold, *Histoire des Turcs*, P.56.

¹⁶ - Barthold, *Histoire des Turcs*, P.57

¹⁷ - Ibid



¹⁸ - El Narchakhi, Abou bakr ibn Djaefar, *Tarikh Boukharat* traduit, Badawi Amin ab del Madjid elTerrazi. Le Caire, 1993, P.129

¹⁹ - Barthold, *Turkestan down the Mongol* P.256

²⁰ - Barthold. W: *Histoire des Turcs*, P.48

²¹ - Grenard, M.F, «*Tadhkirat La légende de Satok Boghra Khan et l'histoire*», in *Journal Asiatique*, Jan-fev, troisième série, tome15, éd, Ernest le Roux ,PARIS,1900, P.16.

²² - Anonymous, *The regions of the world; Hudud al Alam, The regions of the world, a Persian geography 372A.H- 982 A*, translate:V .Minorsky, Oxford press, London,1937,P. 243.

²³ . His kingdom is named after him, thus it is called **the land of Baghraj**. They are a Turkic people who wear turbans without beards. Their land is a month's journey in distance. They have a great king who is said to be a descendant of Yahya ibn Zayd. They possess a Qur'an with a eulogy for Zayd written on its back, and they venerate this Qur'an. To them, Zayd is the king of the Arabs, and Ali ibn Abi Talib is the leader of the Arabs. They do not recognize as a leader anyone who is not from the lineage of this Ali. A miracle of these kings, who are descended from Zayd, is that they have long beards, long noses, and wide eyes. This people has a Khurasani army, and their men are numerous. Their craft is the making of weapons; they produce very good tools. Zakariya ibn Muhammad al-Qazwini: *Monuments of the Lands and News of the People*, published by Ferdinand Wüstenfeld, Islamic Geography, Frankfurt University, 1414 AH/1994 AD, vol. 198, p. 390-391.

²⁴ - Grenard, M.F, op.cit, P,16

²⁵ - Kashgar is a city situated in the Xinjiang region of China and has retained its name until the present day. In the Chinese chronicles of the Tang Dynasty, it was referred to as "Kiu-cha." Abu al-Fida mentions it as "Kashgar". It is considered the capital of Turkestan and a major city in the East. It has been home to many Muslim scholars and intellectuals. Ibn Sa'id described it as a large, fortified city with a predominantly Muslim population. Al-Biruni, mentioned in his book "The Canon of Mas'ud" that in the Turkic language, Kashgar is known as "Ardu Kend", meaning "Land of Tents". He noted that it was a city with villages and farms, and that travelers from Samarkand often visited it. The inhabitants were Muslims, and one of

their famous scholars was Abu al-Ma'ali Taghralshah Muhammad ibn al-Hasan ibn Hashim al-Kashgari, a preacher, scholar, and expert in hadith and tafsir. He was born in 390 AH and lived beyond 550 AH. Another notable scholar from Kashgar was Abu Abd Allah al-Husayn ibn Ali ibn Khalaf al-Almai, who authored many books. For further reading, see the following works: Abu al-Fida al-Hamwi: *Taqwim al-Buldan* (Geography), edited by J.T. Renaud, M.C. de Seman, and published by the Institute for the History of Arabic-Islamic Sciences, Frankfurt University, 1412 AH/1992 AD, pp. 504-505. Yaqut al-Hamawi: *Mu'jam al-Buldan* (Dictionary of Countries), part of the Islamic Geography series, published by the Institute for the History of Arabic-Islamic Sciences, Frankfurt University, 1415 AH/1994 AD, pp. 237-238. W. Barthold and B. Spuler: "Kashghar", in the Encyclopaedia of Islam, new edition, prepared by E. Van Donzel, B. Lewis, and Ch. Pellat, Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1990, p. 698.

²⁶- Ibn al-Athir, *El Kamil fi Tarikh*. Revised by Mohammed youcef adel hak, dare l koutoub al ilmia, Beyrout, libanon, 1th édition, (2010), vol.8. P.320.

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²⁸- Barthold, *Turkestan down the Mongol*, P.255-257

²⁹- Ibn Athir, op.cit, vol.8, P.173

³⁰- Anonymous, op.cit, P.280-281

³¹- Al-Kardizi mentioned how the Qarakhanid kingdom emerged onto the international scene. When the Turk Khagan saw that the Karluk tribes had multiplied and gained dominance, and that they had befriended and intermarried with the Hayatal of Tokharistan, he aided the Yigmi tribe of the Toghuza Ghuz in settling between the kingdom of the Khelkh (Karluks) and the Kimak. Their region, located in northern China, is a month's journey in distance and its people are wealthy and possess many livestock. Their leader was named 'Gamatagh'. See :Al-Kardizi, *Zain al-Akhbar*, pp. 374, 375.

³²- Grousset, op.cit, P.199

³³- Grousset, op.cit, P.200

³⁴- The manuscript that chronicles the life of Satok Bughra Khan was translated and published by Grenard in 1889. The original, dating back to the 17th century, consists of 135 pages and is divided into three parts. In the first part, the historian discusses Abu Nasr al-Samani, in the second part, Satok Bughra Khan, and in the third part, his successor Harun. The narrative is clearly mixed with legends.

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³⁵- Grenard, **op.cit**, P.6

³⁶ - Grenard, Tadhkira:7

³⁷ - Ibid

³⁸- Grenard, op.cit, P.8

³⁹- (Grenard, op.cit, P.9.

⁴⁰ - Grenard, op.cit, P.9-10

⁴¹- Grousset, op.cit,P.200

⁴² - Golden, Peter B.An Introduction to the History of the Turkic Peoples;
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⁴³ - De la vaissière,Etienne, Sogdian Traders A History.Translated by
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