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THE BATTLE OF ATLAH AND ITS IMPORTANCE IN THE HISTORY OF MIDDLE SIRDARYA BASIN

In this article, will be discussed the historical battle that took place in 751 July in Atlah near the current city of Taraz and its consequences for the future of the Middle Sirdarian basin. In this war for the first time Turks and Arabs have fought shoulder to shoulder and won the war against Chinese. The results of the war have not only left a mark on the region but also on a worldwide scale. Because with the knowledge of Chinese paper makers taken captive after this war, Muslims were able to open the first paper mills in Samarkand. Another thing worth noting is that after a several centuries production of paper has passed to Europe through Andalusia. So the war of Atlah can be called important in terms of the cultural history of the world. The issue is as important as the current Kazakh nation, and as for all Turkish-born peoples. Because this single war decided their future. Most historians have touched details of this war briefly, however, the general course of the war and its consequences have been untouched. In this article, the author will elaborate on the subject using classical Arabic and other valuable sources on this field. It will also deal with the political incidents and relations between the Abbasid caliphs and the Turkish slaves that took place in the region in the following years from the war.

Key words: Atlah, muslims, Sirdarya, Abbasids, war, Turks, Arabs, slave, culture, Chinese, Karluks, chaliph.

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Атлах шайқасы және оның Сырдарияның орта ағысы аймағына маңызы

Бұл мақалада 751 жылдың шілде айында қазіргі Тараз қаласына жақын жердегі Атлах елді-мекенінде орын алған шайқас қарастырылады. Тарихта «Атлах Соғысы» деген атпен қалған шайқастың Сырдарияның орта ағысында орналасқан аймаққа тигізген саяси әсері зор. Бұл соғыста алғаш рет түркілер мен арабтар иық-иыққа ортақ дұшпандары қытайларға қарсы соғысып, үлкен жеңіске жетті. Осының арқасында екі ұлттың арасындағы саяси және мәдени интеграция күшейе түсті. «Атлах» – әлемдік мәдениет тарихы жағынан да аса маңызға ие. Себебі осы шайқаста қолға түскен Қытайдың қағаз ұсталары мұсылмандар үшін таптырмас олжа болды. Ұсталардың білімі мен нұсқаулары арқасында мұсылмандар алғаш рет Самарқанд қаласында қағаз фабрикасын құра білді. Тағы бір тілге тиек етілетін жәйт, аталмыш қағаз жасау өнері бірнеше ғасырдан кейін Андалусиядан (қазіргі Испания) мұсылмандар арқылы Еуропа елдеріне өтті. Жалпы айтқанда Атлах соғысы қазіргі қазақ халқы һәм бүкіл түркі қауымдары үшін маңызды бір оқиға болып саналады. Өйткені бұл шайқаста олардың болашағы шешілген болатын. Дегенмен қазіргі таңдағы көптеген тарихшылардың бұл маңызды шайқас жайында сөз қозғап жүргеніне қарамастан, оқиғаның жалпы детальдары мен оның әкелген нәтижелері тиісті деңгейде қарастырылмай отыр деуге болады. Бұл мақалада автор классикалық араб дереккөздері мен осы саладағы өзге де салмақты еңбектерді пайдалана отырып, оқиғаны бастан-аяқ тереңірек зерделейді. Сондай-ақ аталмыш оқиғаның әкелген нәтижелеріне, одан кейін жолы ашылған Аббасилер мен түркілер арасында құл саудасы тілге тиек етіледі.

Түйін сөздер: Атлах, мұсылмандар, Сырдария, Аббасилер, соғыс, түркілер, арабтар, құл, мәдениет, қытайлықтар, қарлұқтар, халифа.

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Атлахская битва и ее влияние на среднее течение Сырдарьинского округа

В этой статье обсуждается историческая битва Атлах и ее значение в истории среднего течения Сырдарьи, которая произошла в 751 году недалеко от сегодняшнего Тараза. В этой войне впервые турки и арабы сражались плечом к плечу и выиграли войну против китайцев. Результаты войны не только оставили свой след в регионе, но и во всем мире. Во время войны китайские мастера бумажного ремесла были взяты в плен, с помощью их знаний мусульмане смогли открыть первые бумажные фабрики в Самарканде. Также стоит отметить, что спустя несколько столетий производство бумаги перешло в Европу через Андалусию (Нынешняя Испания). Поэтому войну в Атлахе можно назвать важной и с точки зрения культурной истории мира. Этот вопрос так же очень важен, как для нынешней культуры казахской нации, и для всех тюркоязычных народов. Потому что эта война в дальнейшем решила их будущее. Большинство историков косвенно затронули детали этой войны, однако ее общий ход и последствия остались нетронутыми. В этой статье автор использует классический арабский и многие другие источники. В нем также будут рассмотрены политические инциденты и отношения между халифами Аббасидов и турецкими рабами, которые происходили в регионе в последующие годы после войны.

Ключевые слова: Атлах, мусульмане, Сырдарья, Аббасиды, война, турки, арабы, рабы, культура, китайцы, карлуки, халифы.

Introduction

The word “Middle Sirdarya basin” is not a term given to a geographical region but is a name given by us to describe the southern part of present Kazakhstan. As the name indicates, the region is located in the middle of the Sirdarya River, which spans 2,800 kilometers and starts from the present Kyrgyzstan territory than crosses to Uzbekistan after that flows into Aral Lake in Kazakhstan. The border of the region includes Signak city in the west, Taraz along Jetisu in the east, Moyunkum desert in the north and Shash in the south. The major cities of the region in XII-XIII. centuries were: Isficab, Usbanikent, Taraz, Shash, Signak, Shaugar, Sauran, Kulan, Navaket, Farab, Otrar. Since 1000 BC people have started to settle in the middle Sirdarya basin. The first known residents are the Saks. Middle Sirdarya basin which located at the center of Silk Road has been the region where various nations have tried to dominate throughout history due to its geographical position. In the middle of the IV. BC Century the Middle Sirdarya basin was partially invaded by Alexander the Great. The region was sometimes governed by indigenous dynasties and sometimes lived under the influence of the Persian Empire. In VI. AD when Kokturks had risen to power they took a control on the region in a short time. In time, with the weakening of the Turkish Khaganate, the Chinese began to penetrate the region and faced with Muslim Arabs.

The battle of Atlah

The resources related to the Atlah war, which constitute the turning point of history in the Middle Sirdarya basin, are divided into Arabic and Chinese. Ibn Tayfur (819-893), who gave information about the incident for the first time. But he just reported Abu Muslim's, who was a commander of Abbasids in Khurasan, sending Ziyad b. Salih to war with Chinese. Muqaddisi and Ibn Al-Athir give brief information without entering the details of the war (Yazıcı, 2002: 37). Interestingly, there is no single word in the works of Tabari and Yakubi, the classical Islamic historians, about Atlah or the Talas war. Perhaps because of Arab historians were busy recording political events that had arisen due to the dynastic change in the Islamic State, they could not find time to pay attention to what was happening on the other side of the state (Barthold, 1990: 212). Chinese sources have provided more detailed information. In general, Arab and Chinese sources provide the same information and do not contradict each other.

The Abbasids faced a Chinese danger in western Turkestan when they passed to the caliphate. As a matter of fact, western Turkestan has become a battlefield between Turks and Chinese for centuries. Although the effects of the Chinese were felt in this region from time to time, states like Kokturk and Turkesh that were established in Western Turkistan, prevented the Chinese from taking full control of

the territory (Yıldız, 1976: 32). However, after the assassination of Su-lu by his own man Kursul in 738, the struggle for domination in the region between the Black Turks and the Yellow Turks began. These Turkish tribes, which have been worn out from these inner conflicts, have not been able to prevent the Karluks from migrating to Turkestan from the Altai and Tarbagatay mountains since 746 years. Now the political void was formed in Western Turkistan (Zhandarbek, 2002: 91).

During this period, China was ruled by the powerful emperor Hiuan-tsang (713-755) belonging to the Tang dynasty (618-906) (Yazıcı, 2002: 36). In 748, the Chinese went west to capture Kucha and eastern Turkestan (Turan, 1978: 215). After that, the Toharistan's king asked a help from China against a few small rulers who organized the raids on him in Gilgit and Chitral valleys in Pamir. Kao Sien-tche¹, the governor of China's Kucha, who was sent by the Tang emperor to overthrow these small rulers, successfully fulfilled his task (Gibb, 1930: 80). It is noted in Chinese sources, that Kao Sien-tche, who shows himself as a deft commander in military expeditions to Tibetans in Pamir against Tibetan troops, orders to start movements in the north as a next stage. As a matter of fact, in 748, Kao captured Tokmak city. The uprisings of the locals against the invaders were severely suppressed, and as a punishment the city burned down (Hodjaev, 2015: 20).

For the Tang Empire whom the all the achievements above weren't seen enough, needed an official excuse to spread westward to the Middle Sirdaria basin, where the void of authority had occurred. Then, in 750 Kao Sien-tche sent king of Shash Bagatur Tudun despite his apologies, to China and was executed there (Roux, 1999: 190-191), on the pretext that he did not fulfill his duty to protect the border (Barthold, 1990: 211). The murder of king of Tashkent Bagatur tudun and the mischief made by Kao Sien-tche to Shash's inhabitants, had resulted that son of murdered king, asked for help the neighboring Turks tribes, especially Karluks (Yazıcı, 2002: 36). Even though Turks felt the Chinese danger and wanted to fight alongside Shashids against Tan's army, they were aware that they would not be able to defeat the China's crowded army alone. Therefore, Turks tried to convince Abbasids' Khurasan governor,

¹ Kao Sien-tche was an experienced commander who could see far away. As the general governor of Kucha, he was considered the sole master of the western region of China. See Roux, 1999: 190.

Abu Muslim, to walk Kucha, Karashar, Hotan and Kashgar together under his command (Yıldız, 1976: 36). According to Ibn al-Athir, the reason of Chinese walking on the Middle Sirdarian basin was that İhshid of Fargana requested for a help against Shash kingdom the Tang Empire (İbn al-Athir, 1965: 449).

This narration needs to be taken into account. Because Fargana was the first town who asked for assistance from Tang Emperor in 712, than Fargana's İhshid escaped to Kucha upon conquest by Kutayba and accepted the dominance of China. Moreover, Fargana in Turkestan and Turks in Buhara asked China for help many times against the Arabs during the first half of the VIII. century. But the Chinese who were carrying out careful politics have not acted immediately. It can be argued that there is another factor in the background of the Chinese walk on Tashkent. At that time Shash was ruled by Kokturk princes. So, although Shash did not have a strong army or political authority, it had the potential to unite the Turks against the Chinese because of the presence of members of Kokturk Khaganate family. It is likely that the Chinese started campaign on Tashkent in order to overcome this danger (Yıldız, 1976: 33-35).

In 751, the Abbasids' Khurasan governor Abu Muslim on the request of the son of the deceased Shash's king, he sent troops to the west under Ziyad b. Salih command (İbn al-Athir, 1965: 449). But let us also assume that the Abbasids were not put on such a dangerous battle only for the sake of the son of the dead ruler. Realistically, the Islamic State wanted to secure the western borders, and Muslims just couldn't stay as a viewer while China was spreading its domination in the Middle Sirdarya Basin and Western Turkistan.

In Chinese and Arabian sources, almost the same information is recorded about the general trend of the war and only different information is given in terms of the number of killed and captives. Chinese sources, on the contrary, consider Arabs as invaders, while the Arabs show Chinese as initiators of the conflict. According to Chinese sources, when murdered king's son succeeded to take support of Arabs against China, Kao Sien-tche marched to the west with 30,000 soldiers gathered from China and vassal countries, and after traveling 700 li (406 km.) he reached Taraz and faced the Arabs there (Hodjaev, 2015: 21).

The historian Muqaddisi, who gives information about the war, allows us to look at it from a different perspective. According to him, Abu Muslim, commissioned Ziyad b. Salih to be in conquest at Transoxania. When Ziyad soldier arrived at Atlah

near Taraz, the Chinese moved from the west with 100,000 soldiers. On this, Said b. Humeyd – Abbasids' governor in Taraz- has been involved in defense affairs by arbitrating the city. Abu Muslim, who heard the incident, immediately collected auxiliary forces from Transoxania and sent them to Said (Muqaddisi, 75). If the narrative of Muqaddisi is taken into account, it turns out that Ziyad's role in the war is secondary and that the actual battle has also been won by Said. More importantly, in the work of Muqaddisi, the Arabs as the result of military movements emerged around Talas, provoking China into conflict.

In July of 751 (133 Hijri Zilhijja) two armies met at the place called Atlah in Talas Valley. At the end of the five-day collision, the Chinese lost the war with a huge defeat. In the wake of the war, Chinese side left 50,000 people killed and 20,000 captured (İbn al-Athir, 1965: 449). Muqaddisi records that 45,000 Tang warrior were killed and 25,000 were captured (Muqaddisi, 75). Barthold believes that it is impossible to kill 50,000 people based on the narration of Chinese sources that Kao Sien-tche's soldiers were composed of 30,000 people (Barthold, 1990: 212).

Chinese sources and orientalist – presumably based on those sources- claim that Karluks were on the Chinese front before the war and then moved to the side of the Arabs, when the war started, thus keeping the Chinese in the midst of the two fires and losing the war (Hodjaev, 2015: 21). Other historians argue that the Karluks were among the Shashids at the outset, even more that they were from the beginning among those who provoked Abu Muslim to war (Yıldız, 1976: 36). According to Barthold Shashids had strong friendship with Karluks, who have been living around the Issyk Lake, and that Tashkent has called them to help after the incident of the king's execution (Barthold, 1990: 211). Since there is no clear information about the incident, it is difficult to define which view is more accurate. Karluks, who were living in Western Turkistan, could not stay outside the political movements in the vicinity. I think that Karluks really wanted to stay together with their Turk brothers in the Middle Sirdarya basin, but they did not dare to oppose powerful Tang Empire. So at the beginning, they indicated to the Chinese that they will be joining war in their front. But when the Arabs reached the region and the war started, they quickly passed on to the side of the Muslims using this opportunity.

It can be argued that Chinese lost the war of such strategic significance due to effect of the instability situation in China. Because before the war started,

the conditions seemed favorable to the Chinese, but in reality this was not the case. The Tai-speaking kingdoms of the Nan-Chao dynasty in Yunnan, south-west of China, established a strong state in 738. This kingdom wanted to prevent the Sechuan Chinese from infiltrating Tonkin. The Chinese who intended to expand to the south gave a loss of 60,000 in the battle against Nan-Chao two months before the Talas War, while trying to open the way forcibly. In other words, in 50's of VIII. century the Tang dynasty had to carry out war on two fronts (Roux, 1999: 192).

After this great defeat, the Chinese abandoned their thousand-year ideas about Central Asia. As a result of this war, the question of which of the Chinese and Islamic cults in general would dominate in Central Sirdarya Basin and Transoxania was concluded in favor of Muslims. After defeat, the Chinese supported the rulers who opposed the dominance of the Arabs elsewhere, but they did not dare to engage in open warfare with Muslims. As a matter of fact, in 752, the Urushana ruler requested a help from China against the Arab, but received a rejection (Barthold, 1990: 212).

This historic war has produced some results in the region and around the world. We can list them as follows:

1. The influence of the Turkish element, which had been shaken before the war, has been established. Especially Karluks, who played an ultimate role in winning the war, had the opportunity to establish a state in Western Turkistan after Kokturk and Turkeshs. It is also necessary to say that the Karluks carried out a planned policy before and after the conflict. In this regard, they established an independent state in 766 (Yıldız, 1976: 516).

2. After the fall of the Sassanid Empire, the relations between Arabs and Turks, which had been faced afterwards, continued in an almost futuristic struggle. Therefore, the religion of Islam has not been very popular among the Turks (Yıldız, 1976: 37). But in this war, the two nations have fought shoulder-to-shoulder against their common enemies, that fact brought the Turks and the Arabs closer together (Karapinar, 352). Thanks to this, the Islamization process within the Turks has accelerated especially through the developing trade routes. As a positive result of the Turks accepting İslam, the Turks entered into the military and administrative service of the Abbasids, and from the beginning of the IX. century they have begun to occupy the upper echelons of the Islamic State.

3. The Talas war is also important in terms of world cultural history. During this war China's paper

makers were captured by Muslims. Afterwards, for the first time the paper mill was opened in Sermerkant, with the knowledge of these Chinese craftsmen. Arabs used parchments for writing made from papyrus and animal skin in the Middle East and Egypt. After the event, paper production began to spread throughout the whole Islamic world. Paper production began in Baghdad during the period of Harun al-Rashid in 177-178 Hijra (A.D. 794-795). This was followed by the manufacturing establishments in Egypt, Damascus, Tiberus, Hama, Tripoli and Yemen. From the beginning of the IX. century, paper production was now being made in all Islamic countries, from Spain to India. Later, through Spain, the paper was exported to European countries. European countries, however, only around XIII. century started to produce own papers (Yıldız, 1976: 38).

The development of paper production in the Islamic world has an indirect effect on the rise of science and culture during the Abbasids. In other words, the invention of cheap paper has contributed to the transfer of the books easily. Thanks to the development of the paper, a new type of craftsmanship named "Warraqin" has emerged, which cheaply copied books. Afterwards there even was founded market special for Warraqins (Yazıcı, 2002: 39).

Situation after the Atlah battle

The Sino-Islamic relationship has returned to normal after a while. When Lu-Shan, the commander of China's northern province, rebelled in 756, emperor Su-Tsung (756-762) sought help from Arabs and Uighurs. Islamic State then sent an auxiliary force to China around 4,000 or 10,000, and after the rebellion was suppressed with the help of Abbasi troops, Muslim warriors were allowed to remain in Chinese territory (Yazıcı, 2002: 39). Furthermore, diplomatic relations between China and the Middle Sirdery basin region were not interrupted in the years after 751, and subsequent years, Shash, Khorezm, Fargana, Buhara and Samarkand continued to send ambassadors to China. However, the delegation sent by son of the deceased ruler of Shash to China in 762, was the last. Probably the preeminence of the Tang Empire has fallen in the eyes of the Shashids who have implicitly accepted the political authorities of the Chinese region by sending envoys to China 22 times. Now, the dominance of Muslims in the Middle Sirdarya basin was valid (Hodjaev, 2015: 22).

In this period there was no other state that rose to the level of "Khaganate" except Uighur in the

east and Hazars in the West (Turan, 1978: 217). Moreover, with the complete destruction of the Turkish Khaganate in 766, two states emerged on the stage of history north of Transoxania. These are the Oguz State which emerged in the lower basin and Suyab-based Karluk state which located between Jetisu and Sirdarya (Barthold, 1990: 217). Muslims have defended the border towns of Isficab and Shash in the Middle Sirdery basin, in order to be protected from the attacks of these two nomad states (İbn Hawkal, 1939: 507).

In the second half of the VIII. century, revolts erupted against the Abbasid government from time to time in Khurasan and Transoxania (Roux, 1999: 193). One of the greatest of these is the "White Clothes" (Arabic: Al-Mubayyaza, Persian: Sapid-Jomegan), which broke out in Khurasan after Abu Muslim was executed by Caliph Mansur in 137 H. (755 AD) (Tabari, 489-495). At the same time, these initiatives have gained a religious aspect inspired by ancient Iranian religions. Moreover, the Hurrejmies and the Batinies, which will be released later, also inspired by that movement. It is also true that the supporters of Abu Muslim did not revolt only for the purpose of revenge. This movement can also be perceived as a kind of stance and rebellion of Persians against Arab domination (Shakir, 1995: 132). Abu Dawud, who succeeded governorship from Abu Muslim in Khurasan, was assassinated by rebels in 139 H. (757 AD) (Barthold, 1990: 215). But leaders like Sunbad and Ustassiz who initiated a revolt on behalf of Abu Muslim's revenge, was suppressed on the efforts of the caliphate in H. 152 (770) (Apak, 2007: 77-79). However, the movement of the White Clothes continued to live hidden among the public for a longer time (Zhandarbek, 2002: 119).

The second largest rebellion that emerged in Transoxania in the second half of the VIII. century was a one which led by Hashim b. Hakim. This person claimed to his supporters that deity first encompassed Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Muhammad than Abu Muslim, and now it transferred to him.

Being well aware the mysterious Iranian culture up to a certain point, he created a true theology of light in the Zoroastrian tradition, and said that God sometimes appeared to the prophets as well as to Abu Muslim and now he appeared to him. Hashim, always covered his face with a green veil claiming that people could not tolerate light spreading from his face. Hence, he had the nickname "al-Muqanna" (Veiled). At this time, the Turks were also helping the riots in Transoxania (Turan, 1978: 216). But there was no strong resistance as before in period of

Umayyads. As a matter of fact, al-Muqanna rebellion also supported by the people of Samarkand, Bukhara, Tashkent, Khorezm and Huttal, and local Turkish rulers. The rebellion of al-Muqanna was suppressed only in 780-783 by the governor Musayyab b. Zuheyir. With these last defeat, the great rebellions initiated by the "Abu Muslim's friends" have come to an end (Roux, 1999: 193-194).

In 806-810 Nasr bin Sayyar's grandson Rafi b. Leys's rebellion erupted ((İbn al-Athir, 1965: 195). Rafi's rebellion was supported also by with the inhabitants of Farghana, Hojend, Urushana, Saganian, Bukhara, Khorezm and Huttel. But he finally gave up his rebellion because his allies had abandoned him, and was pardoned by the Caliph Ma'mun afterwards (Barthold, 1990: 216-217).

After assuming the throne, the Abbasid caliph Mahdi (754-785) gave order to the local rulers of Turkestan, Samarkand's Tarhan, Tashkent's Tudun, Urushana's Afshin, Farghana's ruler, as well as to Oghuzs and Karluks in Talas Valley and even to the Uyghur khans to sent presents to him as a symbol of obedience. Except the states which were far from the Islamic state borders the other rulers of region including Shash, Farghana, Sogd have agreed to fulfill his wish (Turan, 1978: 216). Thus, the countries in the Central Sirdarya basin have officially accepted the political authorities of the Abbasids in the region. However, there was a semi-vassal relationship rather than a direct commitment to the center. Apart from the Talas War and the subsequent rebellions, there is no direct relationship between the Abbasids and the countries of the Central Sirdarya basin, and no political relations. Only at the beginning of IX the century, it was seen that the Islamic army organized a series of expeditions to the Central Sirdaryan basin.

In terms of military service, the caliphs of Abbasid showed a more passive policy than their predecessors. However, the Abbasids sent troops under command of Fadl b. Sahl in 812 against Karluks who actively supported all the uprisings against the Arabs in the Middle Sirdarya basin.

As a result of this expedition Fadl advanced to Otrar, and neutralized the commander of the border fortress of Karluks and captured sons of their leader (Baypakov, 1986: 40). The ruler itself had fled to Kimeks territory (Daribay, 2011: 30). But unfortunately no information was reported on how many soldiers participated by the Muslims in this expedition, and details of the war.

In Ibn al-Athir's book noted that the Muslims organized an expedition to the city of Kulan in 810 and as a result the Sufi Shaiq b. İbrahim Balhi was

massacred. In addition, after passing of Ma'mun caliphate office, Otrar did not want to pay the wages that was paying to Baghdad. But caliph did not act strictly. Upon the advice of his wazir (deputy) Fadl, he pardoned the city's annual tribute (Barthold, 1990: 218).

The major consequences of Atlah war: Splash of slave trade and rise of Karluks

The Iranians, who played an important role in the rise of the Abbasids, have begun to take up high positions in Baghdad palace and influencing the caliphs. Naturally the caliphs sought to change this situation, therefore searched for the ethnic elements that would constitute a balance with the Iranians, as a result the Turks came to the scene. It is the caliph Mansur (95-158 H/ 714-775 AD) who started to use the Turks for the first time (Karapinar, 352). In Baghdad, where he plotted the plan himself, he built separate quarters for Khurasan-based troops. Ibn Hawkal (d. 988) explains that the Abbasid caliphs chose the Turks as a troop, because they were more courageous and warlike nation than other peoples (İbn Hawkal, 1939: 468). After Mansur, the activity of the Turks in the Islamic army continued to strengthen, and even in the period of Harun Ar-Rashid (169-193 H. /786-809 AD), the majority of the palace guards were Turks. In time, the Turks, who occupied the key authorities in the army, gained a absolute influence on palace, overthrowing caliphs and appointing new ones to their place (Hasan, 1965: 7-8).

During the period of Caliph Mamun (197-217 H/813-833 AD), the number of Turks in Baghdad increased even more (Doğuştan Günümüze Kadar Büyük İslam Tarihi, 1992: 348). Because Mamun owed İranians who helped him to win the war for throne with his brother Amin. So he was obliged to give İranians high positions in the state level. But later on, Mamun started worrying about the increasing influence of the Persian elements in the state, so in order to provide a balance against them, he began to take obedient Turks for military service. His brother Mu'tasim helped bring paid soldiers from the Turkish lands. In this regard, the number of Turkish troops in Baghdad increased to 18.000 in a short time (Yazıcı, 2002: 45).

In the time of Mutasim, Turks became the strongest ethnic element together with Arabs in Baghdad (Apak, 2007: 215). The caliph has assigned them to important tasks in the state and has separated them from the provinces. In this period, the number of Turks in Baghdad reached 50.000 (Hasan, 1965:

193). Masudi (d. 956) also records that Mu'tasim liked to take troops of Turkish origin and that he brought many Turks from Fargana in the Sirdarya basin. Even when they began to multiply in Baghdad and annoy the indigenous people, the caliph had to build the city of Samarra in four farsahs (1 farsah is nearly 5.5 km.) from the capital (Masudi, 1965: 53).

In these period, the slave trade developed and the slave markets were formed almost in all big cities. For example, in Basra "Suqu-n Nahhasin", Suku-r Raqiq in Samarra, and "Shariu Dari-r Raqiq" in Baghdad were famous slave markets (Yazici, 2002: 43).

In Islamic sources names such as "Atrak", "Mawla", "Gilmanu-l Atrak" or "Mamluk" were used for the Turks who were brought from Transoxania and Middle Sirdarya basin to those markets. The Turk slaves brought to the caliphate court were sometimes bought, sometimes sent by the states instead of tribute. As noted some historians called them as "Atrak" (Turks) or "Gilman" (Boys), relying on this it does not seem right to assert that they came as servants, not as slaves. However, claiming that they were initially brought as slaves, and then, by virtue of their ability, rose to paid soldiers or commanders level is acceptable.

Nevertheless, the practice of bringing Turk soldiers from Central Asia has been halted since the second half of the IX. century in the period of caliph Mutawakkil (847-861). Thus, the number of Turkish soldiers decreased due to deaths in wars and during suppressing rebellions, and no additions were provided. Caliph Mu'tamid Alallah (870-892) was also concerned about the over-empowerment of the Turks in the state, so he transferred the capital from Samarra to Baghdad once again to weaken the influence of Turks in palace (Apak, 2007: 325).

After the Battle of Atlah neither Arabs or the Chinese dominated in the Middle Sirdarya basin. Even though the local dynasties seemed to accept the authority of the Abbasid caliphate, -the victor of war- in the region, the Islamic State could not actually dominate the area. In fact, after the collapse of Turkish State, the Oghuzs and Karluks -Turk origin tribes- took the political dominance.

Giving information about this period, the geographers record that the Oghuzs lived from Khorezm until Isfijab, and from Isficab to Farghana inhabited by Karluks (İbn Hawkal, 1939: 467). So in this period, Middle Sirdarya basin was under control of two Turkish tribes, Oghuzs in south-east, Karluks in north-west side.

The first information about the Karluks is found in Chinese sources and in the documents that they

were recorded as Ka-lo-Uk in 413. But as a tribe Karluks emerged at the end of VI. century. During this period, Karluks lived under "Three Karluks" name in the west side of Altay mountains in Zaisan, in the middle of Alakol and Uruntu lakes, as well as on the banks of the Black İrtish river and in Tarbagatay mountains (Sizdikov, 2015: 31). Medieval geographers like Isthahri (d.957) and Abu Zayd Balhi (850-934) records that Karluks, Tokuzoghuzs, Kyrgyzs, Oghuzs and Kimeks were the Turkish origin tribes and they understood each other's languages. Chinese sources say that the culture and languages of the Karluks are similar to those of other Turkish tribes in Western Turkestan (Amanjolov, 2005: 175).

Muslim geographers named them as "Halluh" or "Harluh", Soghdians "Grr-Wgt", Mongols as "Har-Lu-Ut". Karluks were largest tribe of Turks. Politically, they were first subjected to the Kokturk Khaganate, than sometimes accepted the dominance of the West or East Khaganate, it depended which one had more power (Kazakhstan Tarihi, 1996: 306).

From the middle of VII. century it is seen that the Karluks began to actively participate in political events in Western Turkistan (Klyashtorni, Sultanov, 2004: 112). Despite the recognition of East Turkish Khaganate domination, which founded in 682, Karluks did not present themselves as obedient subjects. This nomadic nation, which embraces the spirit of freedom of the broad plateaus, only in the first quarter of VIII. century rose up against the center three times. Their movements were suppressed without difficulty by the Turkish State, which was strong at that time (Kazakhstan Tarihi, 1996: 306).

Karluk's struggle for the independence gave result in the middle of the VIII. century, when the situation in the region has changed. In 742, Karluks in alliance with Uyghurs and Basmils rebelled against East Turkish Khaganate and succeeded to win over Kutlug and his supporters. It is noted that China has supported these three tribes uprising by sending a union (Sizdikov, 2015: 90). Basmil, Uyghur and Karluks who played the crucial role on the collapse Khaganate had a right to fill the political gap left by after it (Klyashtorni, Sultanov, 2004: 111). However in 744 Karluks and Uyghurs formed a alliance against their former ally Basmils and destroyed them. Among these political events that occurred one after the other most of political profits received Uyghurs and they were able to establish the Uyghur Khaganate in the same year. Therefore, the tribal leader of the Uyghurs who succeeded in

this struggle took the title of “Kaghan” and the ruler of Karluks was named “Jabgu of Right (west) side” (Kazakhstan Tarihi, 1996: 306). Nevertheless, the Karluks, which played an important role in falling of the East Turkish State, probably felt that they had been thrown into the background, and they did not want to be content with the “Ruler of Right side” title. As a matter of fact, in order to obtain more shares from the Khaganate heritage, Karluks have taken a side together with Tokuz-Tatars against Uyghurs. But China’s threat to the region in the 750s and then the Atlah War have resulted that the opponents froze their domestic problems for a while (Klyashtorni, Sultanov, 2004: 113).

After the stormy period settled in the region, the struggle between the former opponents started again. Karluks, who made many alliance this time, marched against the Uyghurs with Enisey Kyrgyzs, Basmlis and the remaining East Turk Khaganate tribes. But after two years of violent war, that took place at the center of the Uyghurs territory, the Uyghurs succeeded in repelling the scattered allied forces (Klyashtorni, Sultanov, 2004: 114). After that, the Karluks put all their power into hold in Jetisu, Jungarya and Tarim basin. However, they were defeated here in 756 once again and had to leave the Jungarya to the Uyghurs. In the end, Karluks abandoned the idea of being a candidate for the lands of the former East Turk Khaganate and directed towards the west. It can be argued that these steps of the Karluks, which cut hope from the heritage in the East, have at least the idea of dominating the heritage of the Turkish State (Minorsky, 2008: 286).

While Karluks were moving westward, they saw little resistance by the small Turkish dynasties and Uyghurs’ vassals. But the greatest rivals of the Karluks in the Jetisu were Oghuzs. However, there is little information about the wars between Oghuz and Karluks. After losing the fight against the Karluks in the second half of the VIII. century, Oghuzs went to the lower basin of Sirderya and got their new home. They set Yenikent which located on the coast of Sirdarya as the capital city. However, in order to show that they had a right on the tribes of Western Turkestan, the ruler of Oghuzs had also used title of “Jabgu” (Klyashtorni, Sultanov, 2004: 115).

Thus, the arrival of Karluk and Oghuzs to the middle basin of Sirderya occurred in the second half of the VIII. century (Sizdikov, 2015: 118). In the sources of middle ages, it is noted that the nomadic Turks lived between the cities of Farab, Sutkend, Shash and Taraz, and their lifestyles resembled the bedouins (İdrisi, 2002: 517-518).

The Karluk State was formally established after

the Karluks had won all their opponents in Western Turkistan and finally conquered the cities of Suyab and Taraz in 766 (Amanjolov, 2005: 178).

In 766-775, Karluks continued their progress towards the west, capturing the Kashgardarya and they dominated Farghana at the last quarter of the VIII. century.

Then the Karluks started fighting again with their former enemy, the Uyghurs. To this end, they formed an alliance with the Tibetans and supported the uprisings that broke out in the Uyghur lands from time to time. Although, Karluks received some gains against the Uyghurs, at the end of VIII. century they began to lose the struggle.

In fact, Uyghurs, who broke the power of the Karluks in 803, reached the Middle Sirdarya basin through Farghana. This was the last success of the Uyghurs to the west (Klyashtorni, Sultanov, 2004: 116).

Despite the fact that Karluks lost the wars in the early IX. centuries, the Karluk State was generally stable and economically prosperous. Because under the dominance of the Karluks, there were rich cities of Jetisu and Sirdarya basin, which provided material prosperity. Moreover, the control of the route of the Silk Road from Taraz to Issyk Lake by Karluks provided them economic gain (Sizdikov, 2015: 111).

Some narrations show that Karluk Jabgu had a visit to Baghdad in 778-779 upon the efforts of the caliph Mahdi and accepted Islam (Kitapçı, 2004: 258). But this report must be viewed with suspicion. Because Karluks actively supported the uprisings against the Muslims in the Central Sirdarya basin and north Transoxania. As a result of that Abbasid caliph Ma’mun (813-833), sent military expedition under command of the his close man Fazl b. Sahl to Otrar basin between 812-817. During this time, the border commander of the Karluks was slaughtered, Jabgu’s family was captured by Muslims, and Jabgu himself had to flee to the territory of Kimek. İdrisi also noted that the increasing of Muslims among the Turks made nervous their non-muslim brothers (probably Karluks) who were not in favor of Islam (İdrisi, 2002: 518). Barthold acknowledges that Karluks went through cultural influence of Muslims more than any other Turkish tribes, however, he is skeptical of the report about the acceptance of Islam by Karluks’ Jabgu. Moreover, Karluks was always at war with the Samanids, the representative of the Islamic State in Transoxania, on the Isfjab and Farghana lines (Sizdikov, 2015: 126). All this shows that Karluks have not adopted Islam at least in the first half of the IX. century.

Uighur Khaganate with whom Karluks had fought almost for a century, were destroyed by the rebellious commanders of Enisey Kyrgyzs in 840. Upon this, the upper authority between the Turks and the presidency passed to the Karluks and Karluks' Jabgu Bilge Kul Kadir Khan, who came from the Kokturk family of Ashina, declared himself as a "Legal sovereign of Steppes" and took "Kara Khan" title (Kafesoğlu, 1977: 128).

The fact that the family of Karluk rulers belonged to the Ashina dynasty, who ruled former Turkish State, made it easier for them to take over this authority. Because the idea of central authority or in other words a single Khaganate, which had been standing for the last 300 years, had disappeared. Now, in the eyes of the Turkish tribes, whoever has a well-established dynasty or family, it gained a legality to rule. As a matter of fact, the rulers of Karluk left the title of "Jabgu" and started to use the title of "Khagan" (Klyashtorni-Sultanov, 2004: 117).

In the Hudud Alem, it is also noted that the word "Jabgu" is the former title of Karluk rulers. However, it is not correct to argue that the Karluks have actual influence over all the Turkish tribes. Probably the "Khagan" title of Karluk rulers was just symbolic. As a matter of fact, big tribes such as Chighil, Tuhsi and Yagma, which were dominated by the Karluks, lived a semi-independent life from the central authority and therefore the tribal leaders tried to strengthen their authorities. This issue reveals the weakness of the central government's authority in the Karluk State. In fact, the State of the Karluks was not a country which ruled by a single tribe. In opposite Karluk State was a confederation governed by number of big tribes including Chigills, Halajs, Azkishs, Tuhsies, and Barshans, just like former Ghun and Kokturk confederations. Moreover, the Soghd in Jetisu, which assimilated with Turks, also have been involved in this confederation (Akishev-Baypakov, 1996: 310).

Unfortunately, after Karluks managed to establish dominance in Central Asia, information on what was happened in the domestic and foreign policy of the state was not sufficiently recorded. The fact that the Karluks were the closest to the Islamic lands made to them to adopt Islam earlier than other Turkish tribes. As a result of this, Bilge Kul Kadir Khan, who was a member of the Karluk Jabgu family, laid the foundation of the first Turkish Islamic State in 940 (Amanjolov, 2005: 180).

During the brightest times, Karluks' territory included the Central Sirdaryan basin in the west, Farghana and Kashgar in the South, Jetisu in the

East, and the Balkash Lake in the North. It is noted in Hudud al-Alam that Karluks are bounded by Tokuzoghuzs to the east, Yaghmas to the South. Their frontier in the east started from Sirdarya and reached Chu Valley in the West, even name of "Karluk Gate" was given to this region (Minorsky, 2008: 289). Medieval travellers report that from Farghana, crossing Karluks' territory until country of Tokuzoghuzs took 30 and half days (Şeşen, 2001: 164). Qudama indicates that there is a 40-day distance from Barshan to Tokuzoghuz city, and the Kimek place is 80 days north of Taraz and these roads are mostly deserted (Qudama, 1981: 195). It is understood from the information provided by Qudama that he meant the deserts of Betpak Dala and Moyunkum that begin from the northern direction of Taraz (Sizdikov, 2015: 127).

Conclusion

In summary, we have seen how important the Atlah war was, which took place in 751, in terms of political future of the Middle Sirdarya basin and entire Turkestan as well. In VIII. centuries reaching the zenith of power, the Tang Empire tended to spread its political dominion far beyond the official borders of the its country. Chinese rulers who followed this foreign policy, have succeeded at a certain level. As we seen in the period before the war, the Tang Empire treated city-states, which located in the Middle Sirdarya region like vassals, and spread the its political influence. However, the fact that the Shash's king was killed by the Chinese with a false pretext, was the last drop of that fulfilled Turkish patience. After all, as we have seen, the Arabs and Turks who were fighting for a half century, successfully pushed the Chinese back from the Middle Sirdarian basin by establishing a strong military ally against their common enemies. Thus, after the war the political ambitions of China regarding Turkestan have fallen into water. As a result of the war, the Turkish-Arab relationship has turned from hostility into friendly relation.

The Turks have begun to take a more warm look at Islam and adopt this religion. As a result of the withdrawal of the Chinese, Oguz and Karluk Turkish tribes, which have been living in Jetisu and Middle Sirdarya basin for centuries, have succeeded in establishing a state for themselves. If the Turk-Muslim ally couldn't have won this war, that two nations wouldn't be able to establish a state. The another result of this event was that, after the war commercial relations between Turkestan and Baghdad developed. As we have seen, the caliphs

who witnessed warlike character of Turk nation, have begun to receive soldiers from them regularly. Thus, in time Turks' political impact rose to such an extent in Bağdad that they started influencing

chaliphs itself. In other words, this war has been a turning point that changed the general course of Turkish and Kazakh history. So importance of this war must never be underestimated.

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