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MING CHINA AND TURFAN, 1406–1517

by
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Turfan was one of the fabled oases on the old silk roads from China to the West. The Chinese sources and the excavations of the German explorers Albert Grünwedel and Albert von Le Coq have familiarized scholars of Central Asia with the early history of the oasis.[1] The post-Mongol era, particularly the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, has, however, been relatively neglected. One explanation for this is that the meager Chinese and Persian sources on Turfan during that period appear to contradict each other. In writing biographies of several Turfanese leaders for the Ming Biographical History Project and in writing a section on "Trade Routes in Inner Asia" for the forthcoming *Cambridge History of Inner Asia*, I have attempted to explain some of these differences. I will in the course of this essay also mention some of the discrepancies that I have been unable to explain.

I. BACKGROUND TO MING RELATIONS WITH TURFAN

Turfan is situated in the southern foothills of the T'ien-shan[a] north of the Taklamakan desert. It lies in one of the world's great depressions, and summer temperatures are extremely high. As Eleanor Lattimore has written, "Turfan is one of the places in Turkestan that foreigners remember about, because it is below sea level and so hot the people have to live underground in summer . . ."[2] The rainfall in the area is slight, and it was only through conservation of the waters descending from the melting snows of the

[1] A good account of the German expeditions in Turfan is found in Albert von Le Coq, *Buried Treasures of Chinese Turkestan*, tr. by Anna Bartwell (London, 1928). The more recent expeditions in the area are covered in Huang Wen-pi, *T'u-lu-fan k'ao-ku chi* (Peking, 1954).

[2] Eleanor Lattimore, *Turkestan Reunion* (New York, 1934), p. 105.

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nearby mountains that Turfan survived and flourished. Carefully constructed irrigation works permitted the inhabitants to cultivate wheat and millet and to grow melons, grapes, and pomegranates.[3] They produced cotton and silk as early as the seventh century. A. D. Some families kept horses and sheep, which in times of peace they occasionally brought to China for trade.[4] The Turfanese economy could sustain a relatively small population. Turfan was, in contrast to such a great city as Samarkand, an oasis. Again unlike Samarkand, it did not possess numerous bazaars or markets where peoples and products from all parts of Asia were found.

Yet the Chinese, Mongols, and Central Asians considered Turfan important. They recognized its strategic location on the northern silk road. It was a vital stop for caravans travelling from Persia and Central Asia to China. Weary travellers could find food, water, and shelter for themselves and fodder and rest for their animals in the oasis. As a result, Turfan played a decisive role in the trade of Asia. Numerous Central Asian states sought to control the area in order to obtain commercial advantages. The Chinese also viewed it as crucial in the defense of their northwestern border. The stronger dynasties attempted either to rule Turfan and station a garrison there or at least to insure that a hostile power did not occupy it.

The Former Han (206 B.C.–A.D. 9) was the first Chinese dynasty to have relations with Nearer Chü-shih,[b] the old name for Turfan. Emperor Wu (140 B.C.–87 B.C.), who coveted Central Asian horses and who sought to dislodge the Hsiung-nu[c] from the region, ordered a certain Chao P'o-nu[d] to pacify the area.[5] Though Chao's initial expedition was a resounding success, the Han could not claim total control of Turfan until the conquests of Pan Ch'ao[e] in the latter part of the first century A.D. That renowned general conquered the region, so that Chinese influence was pervasive for over half a century. The decline of the Later Han dynasty in the second century, however, reduced the Chinese presence in the oasis.

[3] On the irrigation works of Turfan, see M. Aurel Stein, *Ruins of Desert Cathay* (London, 1912), II, 354–357. On agriculture in the area, see Wang Tsung-tsai, *Ssu-i-kuan k'ao* (Peking, 1924 ed.), 2, 13b–14a.

[4] Roy A. Miller, *Accounts of Western Nations in the History of the Northern Chou Dynasty* (Berkeley, 1959), p. 7; Edward Schafer, *The Golden Peaches of Samarkand* (Berkeley, 1963), p. 205. Schafer, following Paul Pelliot, refers to Turfan as Qočo.

[5] On Chao P'o-nu, see Homer H. Dubs (trans.), *History of the Former Han Dynasty* (Baltimore, 1944) II, 101 and Fang I, *et al.*, *Chung-kuo jen-ming ta tz'u-tien* (Taipei, 1965 reprint), p. 1408.

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Turfan was exposed to many non-Chinese influences until the Uighur invasions of the ninth century. China, weakened by foreign invasions and internal disputes and lacking a unified state, could not impose its own rule on the area from the second to the seventh centuries. Traces of Chinese influence survived, however, for according to the official history of the Northern Chou (557–581) dynasty of China, "they possess the *Odes* of Mao, the *Analects*, and the *Classic of Filiality*, and have established Educational Functionaries with disciples to provide for the study of and instruction in these . . ."[6] It seems clear, nonetheless, that numerous Central Asian peoples, including the Juan-juan[f] and various Turkic tribes, occupied Turfan,[7] and one or several of these groups introduced Buddhism to the native population. That Indian religion apparently attracted many converts as evidenced by the abundant finds of Buddhist paintings, statuary, and artifacts in the area. When the Chinese Buddhist pilgrim Hsüan-tsang[g] stopped here in A.D. 630, the King offered to appoint him the chief Buddhist priest of Turfan and requested that he remain to instruct the native monks and residents. Hsüan-tsang, eager to continue his pilgrimmage to India, rejected the proposal, and the King, in turn, detained him. Hsüan-tsang counteracted with a hunger strike which forced the King to release him and in fact to supply him with provisions for the rest of his journey.[8] A decade later, the T'ang, a strong centralized Chinese dynasty, deposed the ruling family and reasserted Chinese influence for over a century. During that time, trade between China and Persia and Central Asia flourished, and numerous foreign peoples passed through Turfan. The decline of the T'ang from the mid-eighth century on disrupted this commerce and permitted the Tibetans and later the Uighurs to replace Chinese domination with their own.

The Uighurs, who ruled Turfan from the ninth to the thirteenth century, did not persecute the assortment of foreign peoples and religions in the region. Neither did they seek to stifle its art which represented the contributions of diverse cultures. Buddhists, Manicheans, Nestorians, and Zoroastrians coexisted in Turfan

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[6] Miller, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

[7] Turfan was known by various names to the Chinese. The Han referred to it as Nearer Chü-shih, the T'ang as Kao-ch'ang, and the Yüan as Ha-la-huo-che (Karakhojo). In the wars afflicting Central Asia throughout historical times, the town was often destroyed and then rebuilt in a nearby but different location. I will not consider these complexities in this brief summary.

[8] Arthur Waley, *The Real Tripitaka and other pieces* (London, 1952), p. 19.

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throughout the period of Uighur control.[9] Twentieth-century explorers and archeologists have uncovered texts, paintings, and artifacts of each of these religious groups. The works of art reflect Indian and Iranian as well as Chinese influences.[10] In short, the population was extremely heterogeneous, and this no doubt facilitated communication and commerce with other states. An even greater stimulus to trade resulted from the Mongol conquests of the thirteenth century. Chinghis Khan conquered Turfan in 1226, and the other Mongol triumphs in Asia culminating in the defeat of the Southern Sung dynasty in 1279 paved the way for a tremendous upsurge in trade between China and Central Asia, including Turfan. The Mongols did not impose barriers on commerce, so that the Uighurs and other peoples of Turfan profited from its position on the trade routes. The descendants of Chingis Khan established a myriad *(wan-hu-fu)*[h] in Turfan, but this military garrison did not interfere with the conduct of trade.[11]

In short, Turfan until the Ming was one of the Central Asian oases that prospered as a result of its fortuitous geographic location. It possessed neither valuable resources nor a huge market for foreign goods. Its agricultural production was for local consumption, not for export. Yet its merchants enriched themselves in their role as middlemen in the trade between China and the West. They served as a powerful lobby for the continuance of such commercial relations. The emphasis on trade, in turn, meant that the inhabitants of the town represented groups of diverse origins including Persians, Turks, and Uighurs. Turfan, like such other oases as Hami, could not flourish without Chinese trade.

II. EARLY MING RELATIONS WITH TURFAN

The fall of the Yüan (or Mongol) dynasty in 1368 and the ensuing military struggles disrupted trade between China and Central Asia.

[9] See Henry Yule, *Cathay and the Way Thither*, 2nd. ed. revised by Henri Cordier (London, 1915), I, 64; M. Aurel Stein, *On Ancient Central Asian Tracks* (London, 1933), p. 259; and Jane Gaston Mahler, *The Westerners Among the Figurines of the T'ang Dynasty of China* (Rome, 1959), pp. 42–48.

[10] Benjamin Rowland, Jr., "Art along the Silk Roads: A Reappraisal of Central Asian Art," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 25 (1964–1965), 262–263; a dated but still interesting source on the Uighurs of this time is E. Bretschneider, *Mediaeval Researches from Eastern Asiatic Sources* (New York, 1967 reprint), I, 236–263.

[11] Chang T'ing-yü, *Ming shih* (Yang-ming-shan, 1962–1963), p. 3790.

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The Chinese and Persian sources record no trade or tribute missions from Turfan to China for almost four decades. The rise of Timur and his military threat to the Eastern Moghuls, one of whose capitals was Turfan, further reduced the possibility of stable relations with China.[12] But, the death of Timur in 1405 while en route for an invasion of China, removed one obstacle while the pursuit of a conciliatory policy by his son and successor Shāhrukh Bahādur permitted the resumption of relations between China and Turfan.[13]

Perhaps even more important, the Yung-lo (1403–1424) emperor of China was determined to initiate relations with other states throughout Asia. He had already dispatched the eunuch admiral Cheng Ho to South-east Asia, the rim of the Persian Gulf, and east Africa to stimulate the states in those regions to send trade and tribute missions to China. He exchanged embassies with Japan, Korea, and Thailand and pacified at least temporarily the Oirat Mongols.[14] He founded horse markets on the border for trade with the Uriyangqad (Wu-liang-ha)[1] of Mongolia and the Jurchen of Manchuria.[15] It is not surprising then that he made the preliminary overtures in relations with Turfan. A Chinese mission of 1406 presented silk to the ruler of Turfan. On May 20, 1407, an embassy from Turfan reciprocated by offering jade to the emperor. A second embassy, led by Buddhist priests, reached China on June 7, 1408, and from this time to the end of the Yung-lo reign tribute missions

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[12] The wars between Timur and the Eastern Moghuls are described in Ney Elias (ed.), *A History of the Moghuls of Central Asia being the Tarikh-i-Rashidi of Mirza Muhammad Haidar, Dughlat* (trans. by E. Denison Ross) (London, 1895), pp. 27–29, 37, 41–42, 46–52 and in Bretschneider, *op. cit.*, II, 226–231.

[13] For additional sources on Timur's abortive invasion of China, see my "Ming China's Relations with Hami and Central Asia: A Reexamination of Traditional Chinese Foreign Policy," *Columbia University Ph. D. Dissertation* (1970), pp. 109–113.

[14] See Wang Yi-t'ung, *Official Relations Between China and Japan, 1368–1549* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1953), p. 35; John T. Meskill, *Ch'oe Pu's Diary: A Record of Drifting Across the Sea* (Tucson, 1965), p. 12; Tilemann Grimm, "Thailand in the Light of Official Chinese Historiography: A Chapter in the 'History of the Ming Dynasty,'" *Journal of the Siam Society* XLIX, pt. 1 (July, 1961) 6; and David Farquhar, "Oirat-Chinese Tribute Relations, 1408–1446," *Studia Altaica: Festschrift für Nikolaus Poppe* (Wiesbaden, 1957), pp. 61–62.

[15] On early Ming relations with the Jurchen, see my "The Jurchen in the Yüan and the Ming" in the Chin Dynastic History Project to be published shortly under the editorship of Herbert Franke.

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arrived without interruption.[16] Table One indicates the frequency and nature of these embassies, as recorded in the *Ming shih-lu*.[17]

Table One: Tribute missions from Turfan in the Yung-lo period

Date	*Tribute*	*Chinese gifts*
1. May 20, 1407 (*T'ai-tsung shih-lu* 66, 3a)	jade	paper money, robes
2. June 7, 1408 (*SL* 79, 1b–2a)	native products	500 *liang* of silver; 100 *kuan*[k] of paper money; 12 lined garments of colored silk; *Assistant envoys* – 30 *liang* of silver; 500 *kuan* of paper money; 3 lined garments of colored silk.
3. July 21, 1408 (*SL* 80, 6a)	horses	100 *liang* of silver; 700 *kuan* of paper money; 7 lined garments of colored silk.
4. June 11, 1409 (*SL* 91, 3b)	horses	paper money, robes
5. June 3, 1411 (*SL* 115, 5a)	horses, native products	paper money, 16 bolts of colored silk; 3 Buddhist robes
6. July 23, 1413 (*SL* 140, 6b; 143, 2b)	horses, western horses, leopards, lions	gauze, cotton, flowered silk
7. December 18, 1413 (*SL* 145, 3a–3b)	horses, gerfalcons	colored silk
8. November 30, 1415 (*SL* 169, 2b; 173, 1a)	horses, leopards	paper money
9. November 7, 1416 (*SL* 181, 1b; 182, 2b)	170 horses	paper money
10. March 26, 1419 (*SL* 210, 1a)	horses	10,000 *ting*[l] of paper money; 70 bolts of flowered silk; 20 pieces of colored silk
11. April 8, 1422 (*SL* 247, 2a)	horses	paper money
12. December 14, 1422 (*SL* 254A, 1a)	1,300 horses, over 2,000 sheep	unspecified
13. April 21, 1424 (*SL* 269, 3b)	horses	160 *liang* of silver; 400 *ting* of paper money; gauze; 3 bolts of thin silk thread; 60 lined garments of colored silk

[16] Chang, *op. cit.*, p. 3790 and Lu Ying-yang, *Kuang-yü chi* (1674 ed.) 24, 32a–32b.

[17] I have used the Academia Sinica reproduction of the *Shih-lu* (Taipei, 1962–1966).

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Twenty other embassies from such Central Asian states as the Timurid capitals of Samarkand and Herat passed through Turfan on their way to the Chinese court. The missions form Turfan itself were often accompanied by the emissaries of neighboring states. Both China and Turfan profited from this economic arrangement. China received badly needed horses along with such less critical though useful goods as jade and gerfalcons and such exotica as lions and leopards (these beasts were probably from distant Central Asian states and went through Turfan to China).[18] The totally useless goods arrived on only two of the thirteen missions, and on both occasions the tribute bearers offered horses as the principal gift. The court fed, sheltered, and entertained the envoys throughout their stay in China, but there were few emissaries so that the expenditures of the court at this time were not burdensome. Turfan, on the other hand, received paper money, which its envoys used in trade with Chinese merchants, and silk, some of which its people consumed and the rest it traded with Central Asian states. This equitable economic relationship promoted peaceful relations and reduced the need for costly military preparations and supplies.

The Chinese sources repeatedly cite Buddhist influence in Turfan, but fail to mention Islam. The *Shih-lu* notes that Buddhist priests were the main envoys on several of the embassies from Turfan. The Yung-lo emperor bestowed Buddhist robes on a few of its emissaries. Ch'en Ch'eng,[m] the official Ming envoy who visited Turfan in 1414, provides a vivid account of the Buddhist temples and monasteries situated in the hills surrounding the town.[19] Ghiyāth al-Dīn Naqqāsh, a member of the delegation sent to China by Shāhrukh in 1419, spent two days in Turfan and noted that "they [Turfanese] had large idol-temples of superb beauty inside which there were many idols, some of them having been made newly and others old. In foreground of the platform there was a big image which was asserted by them to be the statue of Sakyamuni."[20] Yet sometime during the fifteenth century the majority of its

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[18] On the Chinese need for horses, see my "The Tea and Horse Trade with Inner Asia during the Ming," *Journal of Asian History* 4, no. 2 (1970), 136–142.

[19] Ch'en Ch'eng and Li Hsien, *Hsi-yü fan-kuo chih* in *Kuo-li Pei-p'ing t'u-shu-kuan shan-pen ts'ung-shu* (Shanghai, 1937), 17a–17b.

[20] Hafiz-i Abru, *A Persian Embassy to China being an extract from Zubdatu't tawarikh of Hafiz Abru* (trans. by K. M. Maitra, New York, 1970 reprint), p. 13.

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inhabitants converted to Islam, for in the 1450's its rulers were Muslims and its territory dotted with mosques. How this change came about is not reflected in the sources.

It is clear, however, that those rulers of Eastern Moghulistan based in Turfan grew more powerful in the four decades following the death of the Yung-lo emperor in 1424. They annexed the nearby towns of Karakhojo and Lukchin and created a major state in Central Asia.[21] Their envoys, as noted in Table Two, continued to stream to the Chinese capital with tribute offerings.

Table Two: Tribute embassies from Turfan (1425–1462)

Date	*Tribute*	*Chinese gifts*
1. August 7, 1425 (*Hsüan-tsung shih-lu* 4, 7a; 5, 9b)	horses	paper money
2. August 29, 1426 (*SL* 19, 11b)	horses	unspecified
3. October 7, 1426 (*SL* 21, 2a; 22, 1b)	horses, camels	flowered silk, silver, paper money, lined garments of colored silk, gauze, silk gauze, robes
4. May 8, 1427 (*SL* 27, 8b)	horses, camels, native products	unspecified
5. September 2, 1428 (*SL* 45, 7b, 9a)	horses	gauze, coarse silk, fine silk brocaded with gold, coarse silk robes
6. January 21, 1429 (*SL* 49, 3a–3b)	horses	unspecified
7. April 10, 1429 (*SL* 52, 4a, 8b–9a)	horses	silver, paper money, lined garments of colored silk
8. June 14, 1429 (*SL* 54, 3b)	horses	unspecified
9. September 24, 1429 (*SL* 57, 11a; 58, 7b)	horses	paper money, colored silk, coarse silk
10. May 30, 1430 (*SL* 66, 3b)	unspecified	paper money, colored silk
11. July 7, 1430 (*SL* 67, 6b; 68, 2b)	horses	lined garments of colored silk, cotton, robes
12. August 30, 1437 (*Ying-tsung shih-lu* 32, 7a–7b)	horses	unspecified
13. December 28, 1442 (*SL* 98, 10b–11a)	horses, jade	colored silk

[21] Tseng Wen-wu, *Chung-kuo ching-ying hsi-yü shih* (Shanghai, 1936), p. 228; Lung Wen-pin, *Ming hui-yao* (Peking–Shanghai, 1956 ed.), p. 1550; and Chang, *op. cit.*, p. 3790.

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Date	*Tribute*	*Chinese gifts*
14. January 22, 1450 (*SL* 199, 7b)	unspecified	unspecified
15. January 10, 1453 (*SL* 224, 1a–1b)	horses	lined garments of colored silk, fine silk robes
16. March 27, 1459 (*SL* 300, 7b)	unspecified	unspecified
17. May 30, 1462 (*SL* 340, 1a)	horses	lined garments of colored silk, fine silk robes

Forty-six other missions from Central Asia reached China during the same period. The Chinese had in the interim suffered severe setbacks. Their military forces declined, their foreign policy became less expansionist, and most disastrous of all, one of their emperors was captured by the Oirat Mongols in 1449.[22] They started to limit contact between themselves and other states. The Ming court was upset by the frequency and size of tribute missions from abroad, because of the expense it incurred in feeding, sheltering, and entertaining the increasing number of envoys. Some embassies consisted of two or three thousand men, and their maintenance during a six to nine month stay in China required vast outlays. The tribute system, which had previously been useful to foreigners and Chinese alike, now became a burden on the Chinese court.

Turfan and the other Central Asian states were among the worst offenders. The number of men on their missions was large; they occasionally had bitter and violent arguments (which, according to the Chinese sources, they provoked) with Chinese merchants and peasants; and they frequently arrived during the height of the farming season, causing men to be diverted from essential pursuits to care for their needs. In 1465, the Chinese court finally acted to eliminate these abuses. Yao K'uei,[n] the Minister of Rites, proposed that only one mission from Turfan be allowed to enter China every three to five years and that it consist of no more than ten envoys.[23] The court approved of his plan and thereby precipitated a half-century of intermittent warfare between itself and Turfan.

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[22] On this event, see my brief article on "Notes on Esen's Pride and Ming China's Prejudice," *The Mongolia Society Bulletin* IX, no. 2 (Fall, 1970), 31–39.

[23] *Hsien-tsung shih-lu* 22, 3b–4a.

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III. HAJJI 'ALI, AHMAD, AND MING CHINA

The chief of Turfan at this time was, according to the Chinese accounts, Hajji 'Ali (Ha-chih A-li).[o] Several scholars have identified him with Yunus Khan, the ruler of Moghulistan. Though the Persian sources on Yunus and the Chinese sources on 'Ali are occasionally contradictory, this identification seems to be accurate. The *Ming Shih-lu* and the *Tarikh-i-Rashidi* of Mirza Muhammad Haidar, the most important contemporaneous account in Persian, agree that 'Ali, or Yunus, resided in the area of Turfan in the 1470's, that he campaigned against the Oirat Mongols during that time, and that he had a son named Ahmad (A-hei-ma)[p] who succeeded him. Muhammad Haidar fails, however, to mention Yunus' relations with China.[24] The Persian historian also states that Yunus died in 1487, while the *Shih-lu* gives 1478 as the date. Around 1478, Yunus moved to the west, leaving his son Ahmad in charge of Turfan and eastern Moghulistan, and the Chinese historians apparently mistook his departure for his death.

According to the Persian account, Yunus was the son of Vays Khan (d. 1428), the chief of Moghulistan. After Vays Khan's death, the followers of Yunus and those of his brother Esen-buqa engaged in a struggle for power, and the loser, Yunus, who was scarcely in his teens, was exiled to Persia.[25] He must have received a good education, for a later visitor described him as "a person of elegant deportment with a full beard and a Tajik face and such refined speech and manners, as is seldom found even in a Tajik."[26] He seems to have acquired a taste for the niceties of urban life and was reluctant to revert to the nomadic existence of Moghulistan. Nonetheless, after his brother's death in 1462, he, with the aid of the Sultan of Herat, returned and by 1472 had unified Moghulistan under his rule.

Since he sought to consolidate and unify his territory, he initially failed to react to the new Ming restrictions on tribute missions from Turfan. In 1469, however, he sent an envoy who informed the Chinese emperor that his ruler had adopted the title "Sultan" and wished to buy or receive as gifts gerfalcons, a four-clawed dragon

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[24] See Elias, *op. cit.*, "Introduction," p. 63.
[25] René Grousset, *L'empire des Steppes* (Paris, 1939), pp. 569–571.
[26] V. V. Barthold, *Four Studies on the History of Central Asia* I (trans. by V. and T. Minorsky, Leiden, 1962), pp. 149–150.

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robe, colored silk, and other goods.[27] The Minister of Rites replied that Chinese regulations forbade the export of most of these products and that some, such as the dragon robe, were granted infrequently and only by imperial authority. Instead of the goods 'Ali had requested, the emperor gave him textiles. Two years later, 'Ali's envoys again asked for specific Chinese goods, but received a second refusal.[28] These incidents embittered relations between 'Ali and the court and caused him to adopt a more aggressive posture. He had an excellent opportunity both to avenge himself on China and incidentally to enrich himself through neighboring Hami, located less than a week's hard riding away. Noticing that the succession to the throne was creating a crisis and weakening Hami, he plotted to conquer it. In 1473, he mobilized his troops for the attack and within a short time occupied Hami, captured Nu-wen-ta-shih-li,[q] the mother of the former prince, and confiscated the town's seal, which had been granted by the Ming emperor.[29] He plundered the area and then withdrew, leaving his brother-in-law, Ya-lan,[r] with a small force to guard this vital gateway on the road to China.

The Chinese emperor responded immediately to the loss of Hami. He recognized the value of that town as a buffer zone in the defense of China's northwestern border and as an oasis on the main route from Central Asia and the Middle East to China. He therefore urged the Mongols of the nearby Ch'ih-chin[s] guard *(wei)*,[t] also located on the northwestern border of China, to oust the Turfanese from Hami.[30] Apparently, the leaders of Ch'ih-chin hesitated to act on their own, because several months later the Chinese organized their own expedition. On July 26, 1473, the emperor ordered the vice comissioner-in-chief, Li Wen,[u] to lead a military force to Ch'ih-chin and Han-tung[v] and to gain the support of these two guards in the campaign

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[27] Chang, *op. cit.*, p. 3790. On the use of dragon robes in Chinese diplomacy, see Schuyler Cammann, "Presentation of Dragon Robes by the Ming and Ch'ing Court for Diplomatic Purposes," *Sinologica* III (1953), 193–220.

[28] *Hsien-tsung shih-lu* 72, 3b–4a; 86, 1a; and D. Pokotilov, "History of the Eastern Mongols during the Ming Dynasty from 1368 to 1634," trans. by Rudolf Löwenthal, *Studia Serica*, ser. A, no. 1 (1947), pt. 1, 87.

[29] *Hsien-tsung shih-lu* 115, 1b–2a; Fu Wei-lin, *Ming shu* in *Kuo-hsüeh chi-pen ts'ung-shu* (Shanghai, 1928 ed.), p. 3294; and Bretschneider, *op. cit.*, II, 195.

[30] On the Mongols of Ch'ih-chin, see Henry Serruys, "The Mongols of Kansu during the Ming," *Mélanges chinois et bouddhiques* X (1955), 215–346.

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against Turfan. Within a few months, Li succeeded in raising the necessary troops.[31]

By early 1474, Li's forces reached the outskirts of Hami. Li sent a mission led by Ma Ch'ün[w] urging 'Ali to retreat and to return Hami's seal and the mother of the former prince. 'Ali refused and detained Ma for over a month. A probably exaggerated report that 30,000 Chinese-led troops were poised for an attack on Hami and Turfan, however, caused him to release Ma and to prepare banquets for the Chinese mission. During one feast, Nu-wen-ta-shih-li appeared. Noticing that soldiers from Turfan surrounded the area, she told the Chinese envoy that Hami was already destroyed and that she did not wish to return. Later that night, however, she was able to send a secret message to Ma pleading that he oust 'Ali from Hami.[32] On returning to the Chinese camp, Ma conveyed this message to Li Wen. The latter was about to march on 'Ali's base when false rumors that the ruler of Turfan planned to attack Ch'ih-chin and Han-tung reached his troops. The Ch'ih-chin and Han-tung contingents hastily departed to protect their own homelands. Left with only a token Chinese force, Li had no choice but to retreat.[33]

'Ali became ever more demanding in his relations with the court after achieving notable success in inducing the withdrawal of the Chinese expedition. Late in 1474, he offered tribute, and his envoy requested an elephant as a gift. The court rejected his request. Undaunted, 'Ali demanded, a few months later, that more embassies be exchanged between China and Turfan. His envoy pointed out that Turfan controlled Hami and had routed the Oirat Mongols, implying that China would sufer the same fate if it failed to accede to 'Ali's request. The emperor answered that if 'Ali sincerely offered tribute as a vassal the court would forgive him his past crimes. Some officials wished to take drastic action against 'Ali for his continued insolence in occupying Hami, but Hsiang Chung,[x] the Minister of War, argued that 'Ali was a petty barbarian and not worthy of concern.[34]

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[31] *Hsien-tsung shih-lu* 124, 4b–5a; Ch'en Jen-hsi, *Huang-Ming shih-fa lu* in *Chung-kuo shih-hsüeh ts'ung-shu* (Taipei, 1965), p. 1868. Also, see the biography of Li in Chang, *op. cit.*, p. 1896, and for additional sources on him, see T'ien Chi-tsung (ed.), *Combined Indices to Eighty-Nine Collections of Ming Dynasty Biographies* (Peiping, 1935) II, p. 231a.

[32] *Hsien-tsung shih-lu* 130, 4a–4b.

[33] Chang, *op. cit.*, p. 3785.

[34] *Hsien-tsung shih-lu* 135, 7a; 137, 4a; 138, 4a–4b.

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From 1475 to 1478, 'Ali and the court remained hostile. Surprisingly enough, however, tribute missions, as noted in Table Three, continued to reach China throughout this period.[35]

Table Three: Tribute missions from Turfan (1472–1478)

Date	*Tribute*	*Chinese gifts*
1. June 28, 1472 (*Hsien-tsung shih-lu* 104, 8b)	horses, camels, native products	robes, colored silk
2. November 8, 1473 (*SL* 121, 5b)	horses	robes, colored satin
3. March 9, 1474 (*SL* 125, 6a)	horses	robes, colored satin
4. February 24, 1475 (*SL* 137, 3a)	horses, camels	robes, colored satin
5. November 14, 1475 (*SL* 146, 2b)	horses, camels	colored satin
6. February 14, 1476 (*SL* 149, 2b)	horses, camels	robes, colored satin

It is unclear why the court permitted these embassies to enter China. One possible explanation is that they still offered products which the Chinese coveted.

The Chinese sources record the death of 'Ali in 1478. Actually he migrated to the west to lead the urban life that he preferred. His departure provided China with a brief respite from frontier problems in the northwest, but other towns and oases in Central Asia were not as fortunate. 'Ali continued his marauding, capturing Sairam in 1482 and Tashkent in 1485, until his death in 1487 from a stroke.[36] The exiled leader of Hami, a Uighur chieftain called Han Shen[y] in the Chinese sources, took advantage of his absence to unleash a surprise attack on Hami. On May 2, 1482, Han Shen with approximately 9,900 soldiers, 8,600 of his own and 1,300 from Han-tung and Ch'ih-chin, marched at night towards Hami. By June 15, Han Shen reported that he had surprised ninety or so occupying troops from Turfan and recaptured his native land.[37]

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[35] For some difficulties in using the *Shih-lu* lists of foreign tribute embassies, see Henry Serruys, "Mongol Tribute Missions of the Ming Period," *Central Asiatic Journal* 11 (1966), 1–14.

[36] Barthold, *op. cit.*, I, 150.

[37] *Hsien-tsung shih-lu* 226, 4a–4b; Tseng, *op. cit.*, p. 228; Lung, *op. cit.*, p. 1549.

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The Turfanese, under their new ruler Ahmad, would in time respond to Han Shen's victory. Ahmad, unlike his father, had spent his boyhood among the nomads of the steppes, rather than in the sophisticated centers of Persian civilization. As a result, the description of him by his nephew Babur as "a true son of the steppes – a man of powerful physique, a stern and brave soldier, who preferred the sword to any other weapon" is undoubtedly apt. Ahmad's "rudeness in his manner . . . and harshness in his speech" also amazed the future Moghul emperor of India.[38] On his father's death in 1487, Ahmad and his older brother Mahmud divided the territory bequeathed to them. Mahmud became the nominal ruler of all of Moghulistan, but in actual practice reigned in the west while Ahmad controlled the east. Ahmad was renowned for his military skill, and the Oirat Mongols nicknamed him "The Killer" because of his exploits.[39] He launched several successful campaigns against both the Oirat and the Kazakhs, which made him the strongest ruler on China's northwestern border. It seems clear that he would choose a military solution in dealing with Hami and China.

In 1488, the newly enthroned Hung-chih emperor enfeoffed Han Shen as the Chung-shun wang[z] ("Loyal and Obedient Prince") of Hami. Ahmad, who had for seven years tolerated Han Shen's *de facto* supervision of Hami, now refused to accept the Uighur chieftain's assumption of a ceremonial title, as well as actual jurisdiction over this important oasis. He quickly moved his forces to the outskirts of Hami and sent a message to Han Shen proposing a marriage alliance. The latter unwisely permitted him and his troops to enter the town. Taking advantage of his successful ruse, Ahmad killed the Uighur chieftain and plundered Hami. He reported to the Chinese court that Han Shen had died of natural causes and asked to be enfeoffed as the new prince of Hami. Instead, the emperor, who learned of Ahmad's treachery, sent a letter rebuking him for his raid and insisting that he return Hami's seal.[40]

In the ensuing years, his relations with China deteriorated even further. The Ministry of Rites frequently criticized him for sending too many envoys on his embassies and for offering tribute at improper times. In 1489, the court learned that an envoy from Turfan,

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[38] F. G. Talbot (ed.), *Memoirs of Baber, Emperor of India* (London, 1909) pp. 69, 80.
[39] Barthold, *op. cit.*, I, 151.
[40] Chang, *op. cit.*, p. 3785; Fu, *op. cit.*, pp. 3294–3295.

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while on his way to the capital, bought prohibited goods including tea and colored satin. Again it chided Ahmad for the reprehensible behavior of his ambassadors.[41] Because of these abuses, the emperor refused to permit several of Ahmad's tribute embassies to enter China. These refusals may have prompted him to return Hami's seal in 1492. The emperor, on the recommendation of Minister of War Ma Wen-sheng,[aa] immediately appointed Shan-pa,[ab] a descendant of the original Hami royal family, as the new ruler of Hami, but he was unable to restrain Shan-pa and a few of his subordinates from raiding the borders of Turfan.[42] In 1493, Ahmad retaliated by unleashing an attack on Hami, killing over a hundred people and capturing Shan-pa.[43]

The court responded cautiously to Ahmad's second invasion of Hami. Though some officials sought a punitive expedition against Turfan, the emperor merely dispatched Chang Hai,[ac] a Vice Minister of War, and Kou Ch'ien,[ad] a regional commander, to investigate and hopefully resolve the dispute. Having reached the northwestern frontier of China, Chang sent a memorial urging that the tribute road from Central Asia be closed. He explained that China's other tributary states, which desired and in some cases urgently needed Chinese products, would pressure Ahmad into retreating from Hami.[44] His plan was adopted but was not immediately successful, and the emperor opted for a more forceful policy. In 1495, with the encouragement of the emperor and Ma Wen-sheng, Hsü Chin,[ae] the governor of Kansu, gathered troops for an invasion of Hami. Unfortunately, Ahmad learned of Hsü's expedition and quickly evacuated Hami, leaving only a token force to meet him. Hsü easily overwhelmed this small contingent and recaptured Hami, but he failed to recover Hami's seal and Shan-pa.[45] Ma, disappointed by Hsü's failure to rescue Shan-pa, now advocated a readoption of Chang Hai's policy. He decided that pacification of Ahmad would succeed only through strict economic pressure and he with the approval of the emperor, closed all the tribute routes across Central Asia to China. He hoped that other states and tribes in the

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41 *Hsiao-tsung shih-lu* 35, 5a.

42 Ma Wen-sheng, *Hsing-fu Hami-chih* in *Chi-lu hui-pien* (Shanghai, 1938), p. 3a.

43 *Hsiao-tsung shih-lu* 74, 2b–5a; Chang, *op. cit.*, p. 3785.

44 Ch'en, *op. cit.*, pp. 1898–1899.

45 For an account of this campaign, see Hsü Chin's *P'ing-fan shih-mo* in *Chi-lu hui-pien* (Shanghai, 1938).

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Tarim river basin, which relied on Chinese goods, would induce Ahmad to relent. Undoubtedly feeling the effects of their pressure, Ahmad finally acquiesced in November of 1497. His envoys returned Shan-pa and Hami's seal and requested the resumption of tribute relations. The emperor graciously accepted the offerings of the embassy and rewarded the envoys.[46]

The emperor sought to assist Shan-pa to reestablish himself in Hami and bestowed him with lavish gifts including a four-clawed dragon robe, a highly coveted garment. The new chief was, however, despotic and unpopular and was, according to the *Ming shih*, a heavy drinker.[47] His excesses upset many of his subordinates; so in 1503, they invited Ahmad's thirteen-year old son, Chen Timur (Chen T'ieh-mu-erh)[af], to Hami to wait until Shan-pa's actions led to revolution. The emperor, fearing another Turfanese conquest of Hami, sent a force to dissuade the dissident chieftains of Hami.

Ahmad could not help his son and the rebellious chiefs, for he received a signal of distress from his brother Mahmud. He marched westward in 1502 to assist his brother repel the incursions of the Uzbeg ruler Muhammad Shaibani. In the following year, the Uzbegs captured both brothers. Though he was well treated, Ahmad died of a stroke in Aksu in the winter of 1503/1504.[48]

Even during the height of the hostilities between China and Ahmad, tribute missions from Turfan continued to reach China, as Table Four conclusively proves.

Table Four: Tribute Missions from Turfan, 1480–1502

Date	*Tribute*	*Chinese gifte*
1. December 23, 1480 (*Hsien-tsung shih-lu* 209, 6a–6b)	horses	robes, colored satin, lined garments of colored satin
2. October 21, 1481 (*SL* 219, 8a)	horses, camels	robes, colored satin
3. December 10, 1481 (*SL* 221, 4b)	horses, camels	robes, colored satin
4. February 10, 1482 (*SL* 223, 4a)	horses	robes, colored satin

[46] *Hsiao-tsung shih-lu* 131, 1b–3a.
[47] Chang, *op. cit.*, p. 3786.
[48] Barthold, *op. cit.*, I, 152; Grousset, *op. cit.*, p. 574.

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Date	*Tribute*	*Chinese gifts*
5. May 16, 1484 (*SL* 251, 6b)	horses, camels, silver, squirrel pelts, jade, fine steel knives	robes, colored satin, lined garments of colored satin
6. October 18, 1487 (*Hsiao-tsung shih-lu* 4, 2a)	unspecified	colored satin
7. August 4, 1489 (*SL* 28, 4b)	horses, camels	robes, colored satin, lined garments of colored satin
8. March 24, 1490 (*SL* 36, 2a)	horses, camels, jade	unspecified
9. January 20, 1492 (*SL* 58, 4b; 59, 1b)	horses, camels, native products	5 lined garments of colored satin, robes brocaded with gold
10. December 7, 1498 (*SL* 143, 18a)	unspecified	lined garments of colored satin
11. January 25, 1499 (*SL* 145, 8a)	unspecified	lined garments of colored satin
12. September 4, 1499 (*SL* 152, 11a)	unspecified	robes, colored satin
13. January 8, 1500 (*SL* 157, 5a)	unspecified	robes, colored satin
14. February 23, 1500 (*SL* 158, 5a)	unspecified	cotton, colored satin
15. April 26, 1500 (*SL* 160, 6b)	unspecified	lined garments of colored satin
16. January 13, 1501 (*SL* 169, 7b)	unspecified	robes, colored satin
17. April 23, 1501 (*SL* 173, 4b)	unspecified	robes, colored satin
18. December 16, 1502 (*SL* 193, 3a)	unspecified	colored satin, paper money

The Chinese apparently so coveted the products of Turfan that they did not stem the flow of tribute. It is also possible that they obtained valuable information, economic and military, from the envoys, as they did from the embassies of Hami and other Central Asian states.

IV. MANSUR AND THE FALL OF HAMI

Ahmad's ultimate successor and China's main foe in Central Asia was his son Mansur (Man-su-erh).[ag] Little is known of the latter's childhood and education except that his father offered him a military education. He was, according to one account, a devout Muslim and apparently memorized the contents of the Koran.[49] He

[49] Elias, *op. cit.*, p. 128.

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abhorred luxuries and lived simply and ascetically. After his father's death, he sought to assert his authority as sultan of Aksu and Turfan, but his uncle and his younger brother rebelled. His uncle called on Abu Bakr, the powerful ruler of Kashgar, for assistance, and the latter conquered Aksu, forcing Mansur to flee eastward to Turfan.[50] Shortly thereafter, however, Mansur and his uncle reached a reconciliation and united to suppress Mansur's brothers. Their alliance proved successful, and by 1508 Mansur was the undisputed ruler of Turfan and the surrounding area. He could now turn his attention to Hami, the oasis which his father and grandfather had attempted to annex. By this time, Pai-ya-chi,[ah] a descendant of the original Hami royal family, was its ruler and had Chen Timur, Mansur's younger brother, in his custody. Mansur now demanded the return of Chen Timur, but the latter, fearing that his elder brother desired an uncontested claim to the sultanate of Turfan and thus might harm him, sought and received asylum in Hami.

Mansur soon discovered that Pai-ya-chi and the Chinese court were not on good terms. Pai-ya-chi repeatedly evaded the Ming tribute and trade regulations.[51] The court frequently rebuked him, but such reprimands failed to deter him. In 1513, Mansur took advantage of the dispute to persuade Pai-ya-chi to migrate to Turfan. He then quickly sent troops to occupy Hami, confiscated its seal, and captured but did not injure his younger brother. Two decades earlier, the Chinese court had twice dispatched troops to recover Hami, but its efforts now were feeble. It sent in July, 1514 P'eng Tse,[ai] a censor rather than a general, to secure the release of Pai-ya-chi and to obtain Hami's seal. As P'eng was setting forth for the northwestern border, Mansur raided the guard of Sha-chou[aj] and lands even closer to China. The ruler of Turfan demanded gold, silver, and other gifts for the return of Pai-ya-chi and the seal. P'eng provided some of the ransom, but Mansur failed to carry out his end of the bargain.[52] The court retaliated by prohibiting his tribute embassies from entering China. He, in turn, responded with an attack on Su-chou,[ak] located within the Chinese border. By 1517, he had occupied Sha-chou and was thretening areas still farther east.

[50] *Ibid.*, pp. 123–125. For the approximate locations of Aksu and Kashgar in Ming times, see Albert Herrmann, *Historical and Commercial Atlas of China* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1935), pp. 54–55; for modern times, see the end-map in Stein, *On ancient Central Asian Tracks*.

[51] *Wu-tsung shih-lu* 43, 2a–2b; 45, 1b; 47, 9a–9b.

[52] Chang, *op. cit.*, p. 3792.

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The court finally relented and allowed his embassies to reach Peking. It, in effect, acknowledged his *de facto* control of Hami and Sha-chou. It recognized that it could no longer hold sway over these important oases on the caravan route, and sought an accommodation with Mansur.

As a result, an uninterrupted flow of tribute missions from Turfan, frequently making such exotic offerings as lions, reached China until Mansur's death in 1545/1546. The court made few further efforts to bar his embassies from China, though a few incidents, including China's detainment of several of his envoys, occasionally marred its relations with him.[53] Despite its injunctions to border officials to examine scrupulously the credentials of foreign envoys before permitting them entry into China, one hundred and fifty so-called princes from Samarkand, Turfan, and Mecca reached China in 1536.[54] The Ministry of Rites frequently issued proclamations to limit tribute missions from Turfan, but it and border officials failed to enforce the regulations. The territory under Mansur's control consequently prospered, and, as the author of the *Tarikh-Rashidi* writes, "Any one, for example, could travel alone from Kamul, in Khitai, to Andijan, without having any duties levied upon him; and would be taken every night, as a guest, into some house."[55]

In sum, Turfan from the mid-fifteenth century on apparently had two principal objectives in its relations with Ming China. The first was the continuance of trade and tribute with China and the West. The second aim was to detach the neighboring oasis of Hami, a vital location on the Inner Asian trade routes, from Chinese influence. When Turfan had, during the reign of Mansur, achieved these objectives, its rulers no longer made incursions on Chinese territory. The Ming court sought, on the other hand, to conduct relations with Turfan on its own terms. It designed the tribute system for its pecuniary and military advantage. It obtained goods it coveted in exchange for such products as silk and satin. But it imposed restrictions on its own merchants as well as on the foreign envoys and merchants. It also attempted to use Hami as a convenient buffer against foreign attacks and unwelcome foreign embassies. As its

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[53] *Loc. cit.;* for one of these incidents, see the account of Sayyid Husain (Hsieh-i Hu-hsien) in Paul Pelliot, "Le hoja et le Sayyid Husain de l'histoire des Ming," *T'oung Pao* XXXVIII (1948), 81–198.

[54] Chang, *op. cit.*, 3826; Lung, *op. cit.*, p. 1555.

[55] Elias, *op. cit.*, pp. 126–127.

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economic position worsened in the latter part of the fifteenth century, it added more restrictions. The inhabitants of Turfan, who constantly sought an increase in the number of tribute and trade missions, chafed at the new regulations, and their leaders, Hajji 'Ali, Ahmad, and Mansur, clashed repeatedly with China in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries until the court finally relented, abandoned its claims to Hami, and allowed tribute embassies freely to enter China.

CHINESE CHARACTERS FOR "MING CHINA AND TURFAN, 1406–1517"

a	T'ien-shan	天山	t	wei	衛
b	Chü-shih	車師	u	Li Wen	李文
c	Hsiung-nu	匈奴	v	Han-tung	罕東
d	Chao P'c-nu	趙破奴	w	Ma Ch'ün	馬俊
e	Pan Ch'ao	班超	x	Hsiang Chung	項忠
f	Juan-juan	蠕蠕	y	Han Shen	罕慎
g	Hsüan-tsang	玄奘	z	Chung-shun wang	忠順王
h	wan-hu-fu	萬戶府	aa	Ma Wen-sheng	馬文升
i	Wu-liang-ha	兀良哈	ab	Shan-pa	陝巴
j	liang	兩	ac	Chang Hai	張海
k	kuan	貫	ad	Kou Ch'ien	緱謙
l	ting	錠	ae	Hsü Chin	許進
m	Ch'en Ch'eng	陳誠	af	Chen T'ieh-mu-erh	真帖木兒
n	Yao K'uei	姚夔	ag	Man-su-erh	滿速兒
o	Ha-chih A-li	哈只阿力	ah	Pai-ya-chi	拜牙即
p	A-hei-ma	阿黑馬	ai	P'eng Tse	彭澤
q	Nu-wen-ta-shih-li	弩溫答失里	aj	Sha-chou	沙州
r	Ya-lan	牙蘭	ak	Su-chou	肅州
s	Ch'ih-chin	赤金			

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