

a great Empire in Asia during the last two-thirds of the 12th century. This chief was a prince of the Khitan dynasty of Liao, who escaped with a body of followers from Northern China on the overthrow of that dynasty by the *Kin* or Niuchen about 1125. He is called by the Chinese historians Yeliu Tashi; by Abulghazi, Nuzi Taigri Ili; and by Rashiduddin, Nushi (or Fushi) Taifu. Being well received by the Uighurs and other tribes west of the Desert who had been subject to the Khitan Empire, he gathered an army and commenced a course of conquest which eventually extended over Eastern and Western Turkestan, including Khwarizm, which became tributary to him. He took the title of *Gurkhan*, said to mean Universal or Suzerain Khan, and fixed at Bala Sagun, north of the Thian Shan, the capital of his Empire, which became known as *Kará* (Black) *Khitai*.* [The dynasty being named by the Chinese *Si-Liao* (Western Liao) lasted till it was destroyed in 1218.—H. C.] In 1141 he came to the aid of the King of Khwarizm against *Sanjar* the Seljukian sovereign of Persia (whence the *Samiard* of the Syrian Bishop), who had just taken Samarkand, and defeated that prince with great slaughter. Though the Gurkhan himself is not described to have extended his conquests into Persia, the King of Khwarizm followed up the victory by an invasion of that country, in which he plundered the treasury and cities of Sanjar.

Admitting this Karacathayan prince to be the first conqueror (in Asia, at all events) to whom the name of Prester John was applied, it still remains obscure how that name arose. Oppert supposes that *Gurkhan* or *Kurkhan*, softened in West Turkish pronunciation into *Yurkan*, was confounded with *Yochanan* or *Johannes*; but he finds no evidence of the conqueror's profession of Christianity except the fact, notable certainly, that the daughter of the last of his brief dynasty is recorded to have been a Christian. Indeed, D'Ohsson says that the first Gurkhan was a Buddhist, though on what authority is not clear. There seems a probability at least that it was an error in the original ascription of Christianity to the Karacathayan prince, which caused the confusions as to the identity of Prester John which appear in the next century, of which we shall presently speak. Leaving this doubtful point, it has been plausibly suggested that the title of Presbyter Johannes was connected with the legends of the immortality of John the Apostle (*ὁ πρεσβύτερος*, as he calls himself in the 2nd and 3rd epistles), and the belief referred to by some of the Fathers that he would be the Forerunner of our Lord's second coming, as John the Baptist had been of His first.

A new theory regarding the original Prester John has been propounded by Professor Bruun of Odessa, in a Russian work entitled *The Migrations of Prester John*. The author has been good enough to send me large extracts of this essay in (French) translation; and I will endeavour to set forth the main points as well as the small space that can be given to the matter will admit. Some remarks and notes shall be added, but I am not in a position to do justice to Professor Bruun's views, from the

* A passage in Mirkhond extracted by Erdmann (*Temudschin*, p. 532) seems to make Bálá Sághún the same as Bishbálík, now Urumtsi, but this is inconsistent with other passages abstracted by Oppert (*Presbyter Johan.* 131-32); and Vámbéry indicates a reason for its being sought very much further west (*H. of Bokhara*, 116). [Dr. Bretschneider (*Med. Res.*) has a chapter on Kara-Khitai (I. 208 seqq.), and in a long note on Bala Sagun, which he calls Belasagun, he says (p. 226) that "according to the *Tarikh Djihan Kúshai* (*d'Ohsson*, i. 433), the city of Belasagun had been founded by Buku Khan, sovereign of the Uigurs, in a well-watered plain of Turkestan with rich pastures. The Arabian geographers first mention Belasagun, in the ninth or tenth century, as a city beyond the Sihun or Yaxartes, depending on *Isfidjab* (Sairam, according to Lerch), and situated east of Taras. They state that the people of Turkestan considered Belasagun to represent 'the navel of the earth,' on account of its being situated in the middle between east and west, and likewise between north and south." (*Sprenger's Poststr. d. Or., Mavarannahar*). Dr. Bretschneider adds (p. 227): "It is not improbable that ancient Belasagun was situated at the same place where, according to the T'ang history, the Khan of one branch of the Western T'u Kuë (Turks) had his residence in the seventh century. It is stated in the T'ang shu that *Ibi Shabolo Shehu Khan*, who reigned in the first half of the seventh century, placed his ordo on the northern border of the river *Sui ye*. This river, and a city of the same name, are frequently mentioned in the T'ang annals of the seventh and eighth centuries, in connection with the warlike expeditions of the Chinese in Central Asia. *Sui ye* was situated on the way from the river *Ili* to the city of Ta-lo-sz' (Talas). In 679 the Chinese had built on the *Sui ye* River a fortress; but in 748 they were constrained to destroy it." (*Comp. Visdelou in Suppl. Bibl. Orient.* pp. 110-114; *Gaubil's Hist. de la Dyn. des Thang*, in *Mém. conc. Chin.* xv. p. 403 seqq.).—H. C.]