

life. Residing on the northern slopes of the mountains during the summer, their rulers could keep up for a long time what was pleasant in their traditional ways of life, while drawing upon the settled population of the fertile Turfan oases for the material and intellectual resources with which to strengthen their power and to enjoy the pleasure of its possession.

The period of Uigur rule over Turfan lasted until the Mongol conquest early in the thirteenth century and in cultural respects did not undergo essential change even later. The record of a Chinese imperial envoy, Wang Yen-tê, who visited the Uigur king in A.D. 982 has left an interesting account of the flourishing conditions prevailing in Turfan, the abundance of Buddhist convents, the presence of Manichæan priests from Persia, as well as of the intelligent and capable character of the Uigurs. Yet he found old pastoral traditions still favoured by the rulers who annually proceeded to the northern slopes of the T'ien-shan for their residence. Though the Uigur chiefs under Mongol domination turned to Islam, yet Buddhism was still prevalent in Turfan as late as A.D. 1420, when Sultan Shah Rukh's embassy on its way to China passed through it.

This long-continued practice of Buddhist cult, together with the protection from violent cataclysms which Turfan enjoyed under undisturbed Uigur rule, had allowed many remains of pre-Muhammadan civilization, including objects of cult, literature and art, to survive there comparatively well cared for to within four or five centuries of our own time. At the same time, owing to the special geographical conditions affecting irrigation in the Turfan basin, there has been no appreciable change within historical times