

the reign of Wên-ch'êng Ti (452-466 A.D.) we hear of an embassy sent by the king of Su-lê to the Imperial court to present a sacred relic, the reputed dress of Buddha which proved incombustible⁴. Early in the following century Kāshgar figures among the numerous territories of Eastern Turkestan, which the Annals of the Liang Dynasty and the *Pei shih* mention as subject to the Yeh-ta or Hephthalites. By the middle of the fifth century this race, of probably Turkish origin, had founded a powerful empire in the Oxus Basin, whence they carried their conquests down to Gandhāra and beyond the Indus in the south, and as far as Khotan and Kara-shahr in the east⁵.

Dominion
of the
Western
Turks.

Between the years 563 and 567 the empire of the Hephthalites succumbed to the attack of the Western Turks (called T'u-chüeh by the Chinese) under their great Khākān Istāmi, the Dizabul or Silzibul of the Byzantine historian Menander, whose aid Khusrū Anūshirwān, the Sassanian, had called in against these dangerous foes of his dominion⁶. All the territories north of the Oxus previously subject to the Hephthalites now passed under the sway of the Western Turks. Soon their power extended also over the old Hephthalite possessions south of the river and beyond the Hindukush, which the waning strength of the Sassanians proved helpless to retain. From their encampments placed in favourite valleys of the T'ien-shan north of Kuchā and Kāshgar the Khākāns of the Western Turks exercised their sway over dominions probably exceeding in extent even those of the Hephthalites⁷. The Chinese records show that the subject states were left in charge of their hereditary local rulers, but each under the control of a Turkish *Tudun*, who watched over the collection of the tribute⁸. There can be little doubt that the political conditions of Kāshgar, and probably of most states in Eastern Turkestan, were of the type here indicated.

Establish-
ment of the
T'ang
Dynasty.

The establishment of the T'ang Dynasty, 618 A.D., marks the beginning of a new and glorious epoch in the history of Chinese relations with the 'Western regions'. During the reign of its founder Kao-tsu (618-626 A.D.), and during the first years of his energetic successor T'ai-tsung (627-649 A.D.), the struggle with the Northern Turks, whose attacks threatened the very existence of the empire, prevented the prosecution of a vigorous policy westwards. While that struggle lasted the Chinese court was eager to seek the help of the Western Turks, who were then united under the rule of a powerful Kagan (Khān), called *T'ung shih-hu* in the T'ang Annals⁹. He was still reigning when Hsüan-tsang, in 630 A.D., passed through the vast region which acknowledged his sovereignty. The gracious reception which he accorded to the pilgrim

⁴ See Ritter, *Asien*, v. p. 422.

⁵ Compare, for the Chinese records bearing on the Hephthalites and their conquests, Chavannes, *Turcs occid.*, pp. 224 sqq.; *Voyage de Song Yun*, p. 24. Sung Yün, who in 520 A.D. visited both the Yeh-ta seats in Badakhshān and the king (Mihirakula) representing their power in Gandhāra, distinctly attests Khotan as the eastern limit of the vast dominion tributary to them; see *Voyage de Song Yun*, p. 26. The *Pei shih*, which derives its notices about the Hephthalites from Sung Yün's mission, mentions *Sha-lê* (Kāshgar) along with Sogdiana, Khotan, Bokhāra, and over thirty smaller states, as among the 'Western countries' subject to them.

⁶ A rich storehouse of precise information on the history of the Western Turks has been opened up to us by M. Chavannes' translations and critical exposition of the Chinese records concerning them in his *Documents sur les Tou-kiue (Turcs) occidentaux*, 1903. A masterly analysis of

the results obtained from these records and other sources is given in the *Essai sur l'histoire des Tou-kiue occidentaux*, forming Part IV of that work, pp. 217-303. Regarding the conquest of the Hephthalite dominions, see particularly pp. 226 sqq.

⁷ Interesting glimpses of these royal encampments and their barbaric splendour have been preserved for us by the Byzantine embassies which were sent to the court of the early Khākāns between 568 and 577 A.D. for the sake of alliances against the Persians; see Chavannes, *Turcs occid.*, pp. 235 sqq.

⁸ Compare Chavannes, *Turcs occid.*, pp. 52, 263 sqq.

⁹ See Chavannes, *Turcs occid.*, pp. 263 sqq. The Chinese *Shih-hu* (Chavannes, *Che-hou*, Beal, *Yeh-hu*) is a transcription of the Turkish title *Jabgu*, which appertained to the sovereign chiefs of the Western Turks; compare Chavannes, *Turcs occid.*, p. 24, note 1.