

Golden examines the characteristics of the warband found in Roman, Germanic, Iranian and steppe societies, and looks for signs that the Khazar Qaghans in turn maintained an identifiable military retinue. The evidence suggests that they did, and that the salaried element was represented by the Ors, Muslims from Khwārazm who enjoyed various privileges, notably that of furnishing the Qaghan's chief minister and exemption from being deployed against any of the Khazars' Muslim enemies. The dual sovereignty characteristic of the Khazar state from perhaps the early ninth century (whereby the Qaghan fulfilled a purely ceremonial and sacralized role and day-to-day government was exercised by a deputy, variously called the "Qaghan-Beg" or "Shad") is investigated in "Irano-Turcica: the Khazar sacral kingship revisited" (X). Golden links this institutional development, not found among the Türks, with Iranian ideas of sacral rulership present in eighth-century Khwārazm under the Afrighid dynasty and mediated through the influence of the Ors.

One feature of the Khazar state that distinguished it from other nomadic polities (not to mention sedentary ones), of course, was the adoption of Judaism as the state religion, probably in a series of stages spanning the eighth and early ninth centuries. Pointing out in "The conversion of the Khazars to Judaism" (XI) that this was by no means as isolated a phenomenon as is often asserted (precedents include the first-century kingdom of Adiabene and the pre-Islamic Himyarite kingdom of the Yemen), Golden provides an in-depth survey of the dauntingly prolific literature on this topic and explores the chronology and possible political-diplomatic motives. The urge to distance the Khazar Qaghanate from Islam, at least, was most conspicuously expressed in the coinage of the 830s, bearing the explosive legend in Arabic, *Mūsā rasūl Allāh* ("Moses is the Emissary of God"). At the risk of striking a captious note, one is tempted to question the assumption repeated here that conversion began with the ruler (whether the Qaghan or his deputy, we cannot be certain), since in other contexts – the Christianization of the tenth-century Rus', for instance, and the Islamization of the thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Mongols – the "top-down" model is increasingly being challenged.

Like the author's other work, this book is a monument of first-rate scholarship. It demonstrates an enviable familiarity with the primary sources – whether Muslim geographers and historians of the ninth–twelfth centuries, Byzantine authors, annals and other historical works produced in Latin Europe or the problematic Khazarian Hebrew correspondence – and a range of secondary literature in not merely Western languages but Russian, Hungarian and Turkish. As is clear from the copious references, a number of Golden's recent articles have yet to be reprinted in the Variorum format. It is to be hoped that a third volume will follow before long.

**Peter Jackson**

SAM VAN SCHAİK:

*Tibet: A History.*

xxiii, 324 pp. London and New York: Yale University Press, 2011. £25. ISBN 978 0 300 15404 7.

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An up-to-date synoptic history of any nation in a readable narrative style and convenient length is no easy feat. Sam van Schaik succeeds at writing such a history of Tibet. The book covers its subject at a level of detail appropriate for an

undergraduate survey course, incorporating the latest research and the author's own insights at every step. The lack of information on the decline of the Pagmodru or on the nineteenth century in Central Tibet is disappointing, but warranted by the paucity of research in these areas. The writing style is lucid and engaging.

Many important topics here make their first appearance in a synoptic history or are handled with unprecedented skill. I was particularly struck by the description of "Turkomania" at the Tang court (p. 8), the treatment of Tibet's invasion of Khotan (p. 18), princess Jincheng's role in bringing Buddhism to Tibet (pp. 22–3), the succession of Tri Songdetsen (p. 42), Tibetan Buddhists at the Song court (p. 51), and the conference between Lajan Khan and Desi Sangye Gyatso (p. 133). At times van Schaik's original research even corrects the findings of a *locus classicus* (e.g. p. 235 n. 45). However, many intriguing observations lack citation, such as the ceremonial protocol for the 783 peace treaty (p. 29), the *Tang Annals*' aspersions on Lang Darma's character (p. 45 n. 8), and the Tangut ethnicity of the general who Goden sent to Tibet (p. 75).

Writing "though it is sometimes difficult to say whether a famous event really happened as it has been told and retold, that is no reason to dismiss it or consign it to a footnote" (p. xviii), van Schaik errs towards the traditional version of Tibetan history. Thus, despite the dearth of evidence he retains the traditions that Lhasa was the capital of the Tibetan empire (p. 12) and that Songtsen Gampo built there his palace on the Marpori (p. 124). In the main text van Schaik tells the famous tale of Wencheng's marriage to Songtsen Gampo (pp. 7–10) and the footnotes (n. 11) hold the truth of her initial marriage to his son. But, counter to tradition, van Schaik makes clear that Wenchen did not bear an heir and did not introduce Buddhism to Tibet (p. 11).

In some cases van Schaik bends the tale for a better story. In particular, the bellicose portrait of the Mongols is overdone. The Tibetan ruling classes did not immediately accept Mongol rule upon receiving Sakya Paṇḍita's letter (p. 77). Hulegu did not refuse to surrender his appanage to Kubilai (p. 78); he was never asked to. The ebbing interest of the Ilkhanate in Tibet had as much to do with conversion to Islam as with "coercion, poisoning, and finally a terrifying invasion by Kubilai's troops" (p. 85). No doubt the Mongols' "characteristic ferocity" (p. 134) adds excitement to many history books and will continue to do so whether fairly or not.

The book does contain a few claims which are just plain wrong. The view that the clans which initially formed the Tibetan ethnicity "were nomads who had migrated from Central Asian planes" (p. 3) appears to be a novel opinion and one unsupported by linguistic geography. The Tanguts come not from the North, but from the South (where their relatives the Munya remain), and they did not escape the expanding Tibetan empire, but rather this expansion is what drove them north (p. 75). The Rockefeller foundation funded not only the monks who came to England in 1960, but also the Sakyas in Seattle, Namkhai Norbu (who came first to Rome not Naples), and Jampa Panglung in Munich, whom van Schaik fails to mention (p. 252). The melting of the Himalayan glaciers, although bad, will not generally endanger Asia's water supply (p. 264), because the contribution of glacier melt to overall run-off of most of the large Asian rivers is marginal compared to the contribution of the annual monsoon.

Some mistakes have political implications. The Tibetan title *btsan-po* means "emperor" not "king" (p. 2). Qianlong stipulated that the golden urn ceremony be held in the Potala palace and not in the Jokhang (p. 159). Holding the ceremony in the Jokhang in 1995 was a break with tradition. The term 少数民族 *shǎoshù mínzú* means "minor nationality", reflecting the internationalist background of

PRC policy; translating “national minority” (p. 218) is incorrect and endorses the PRC’s efforts to shed this background and the autonomy for the non-Chinese it implies. The meaningless claim that the Gesar epic is “the longest epic poem in the world” (p. 161) is better suited to propaganda pamphlets than academic history. Finally, the remark that “Yonten Gyatso . . . remains the only non-Tibetan to have held the role of Dalai Lama” (p. 177) presents a Monpa (sixth Dalai lama), and a Monguor (fourteenth Dalai Lama) as Tibetan although neither spoke Tibetan natively.

The bibliography cites mostly works in English (some in French). While understandable given the intended audience, this restriction leads to odd results such as citing Hubert Decler rather than Helmut Eimer for the life of Atiśa (p. 57 n. 30 and 31) or Ruth Dunnell rather than Evgenij Kychanov or Tatusuo Nishida on the Tanguts (p. 75 n. 18). Brian Cuevas’ book on the “Tibetan Book of the Dead” is in the bibliography but not cited in text. Lhalungpa (1977) is cited in the text (p. 70 n. 14) but omitted from the bibliography. Finally, there are the tiny mistakes: “tendings” for “teachings” (p. 55), “between” for “among” (p. 76), “Beijing” for “present-day Beijing” (p. 78), 王 *wáng* is normally translated “king” not “prince” (p. 143 n. 44), a note 19 is numbered 17 (p. 218). That is every last thing there is to criticize – the book is superb.

**Nathan Hill**

XINRU LIU:

*The Silk Road in World History.*

(The New Oxford World History.) 154 pp. Oxford and New York:  
Oxford University Press, 2010. £47.50. ISBN 978 019 516174 8.  
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*The Silk Road in World History* is a monograph in the New Oxford World History series. The series aims to move away from more traditional historiographies that privilege histories of the West or the achievements of “great civilizations”, and bring the “new world history” to a wider and more general audience. The series has also published works entitled *China in World History* and *Central Asia in World History* (reviewed above). In this book on the Silk Road and world history, Xinru Liu provides a concise introduction to a subject that is notoriously complex on account of its geographical breadth and the range of cultures, religions and languages involved. Much detail of the trade, cultural exchange, political institutions and religions on the Silk Road can be learnt from this slim volume. The book joins a growing list of titles on the Silk Road for the general reader, following works by Luce Boulnois, Jonathan Tucker, Susan Whitfield and Frances Wood, to name just a few.

The first chapter concentrates on China’s relations with its Central Asian neighbours during the Han Dynasty (206BC–AD220) as the start of the Silk Road. This account focuses too heavily on China, however, and relies on Chinese official history for knowledge of China’s early interaction with other peoples. Chapter 2 focuses on Rome’s relations with peoples to the east: it describes Petra and the rise of Palmyra, and the competition that ensued between the Roman and Parthian empires.

In chapter 3 Liu does justice in a short amount of space to the variety of languages and scripts, and archaeological sites and finds along the Silk Road, while also providing a good introduction to the Kushan Empire. At the end of the chapter Liu traces the spread of Buddhism to Central Asia, and describes finds in the Kharosthi script in the Tarim Basin. Chapter 4 begins by describing Buddhist cave complexes and the