

Chapter 4

Shifting Patterns of Semuren Elite Engagement in Mongol China

As Mongol rule in China evolved, the mechanisms of elite production (selection of officials at the state level, and acceptance of social and cultural peers by Chinese at the local level) became more and more like those used in traditional China. The civil service examinations were eventually restarted in 1315, though on a limited basis. Recruitment of officials from schools became somewhat more regular as time went on. Inheritance of a specific office, known as *chengxi*, or by virtue of the service of one's father, grandfather or paternal uncle – the *yin* protection device – was also implemented (though inheritance had long been practiced by the Mongols). And there was a trend to reestablish Chinese administrative structures that would integrate the center with regional and local areas, and that would better distinguish between the civil and military spheres. This became more important once the Mongols conquered southern China, and implementation of these mechanisms was a genuine shift in attitude on the part of the Mongol royal clan.

Yet these changes were always modest at best, and the Mongols relied on traditional nomadic mechanisms to maintain their preeminence throughout the Yuan era. The four-fold classification scheme reinforced other nomadic traditions such as enrollment in the qan's personal bodyguard, and hereditary inheritance of duties and titles. Some official titles continued to reflect the functional non-specificity that characterized typical Mongol nomadic administrative thinking, even as the civil and military administrative mechanisms became more like those found

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in traditional Chinese imperial systems. Studying the careers and lives of later generations of *Semuren* such as the Uyghurs allows us to see clearly how these changes in the administrative and social hierarchies of power in China took place over time, and the degree to which those changes were effective.

In this chapter we examine the stories of the descendants of two prominent Uyghurs who were part of that first wave of immigrants from Gaochang, Qara Īghach Buyruq and Buyruq Qaya. Both men generated large clans that thrived in Mongol China as *Semuren* officials and as social elites in China long after their ancestors had passed on, and their stories provide us with an intriguing look into Yuan society and politics.

The histories of these families reveal a complex web of strategies used to maintain their dual identities as full-fledged political and social elites, in spite of their origins. Over time many Uyghurs added to their power as members of the *Semuren* status group by also becoming part of the Chinese literati community. They mastered and even taught the Confucian tradition, they became accomplished poets and writers in the Chinese classical style, and they sponsored local academies and performed good deeds in communities in which they lived. They only differed from their Chinese *shidafu* peers in that they were not limited to local venues to exercise their literati credentials. They naturally moved all over China while serving as *Semuren* officials, and their contacts with other prominent Semuren and Chinese enabled these “people in the middle” to form a new national *shidafu* status group not seen in China since the days of the Northern Song.

Qara Īghach Buyruq's Family

When Qubilai Qan lost control of Uyghuristan in the 1280s, Qara Īghach's great-grandson, Yue'ersiman 月兒思蠻, chose to remain loyal to Qubilai Qan and moved his family

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to China proper, ending up in Pingliang Prefecture in Shanxi province. As a result, both he and his oldest son, Ötemish Temür (阿的迷失帖木兒), were admitted to Qubilai Qan's personal bodyguard. When Temür Qan succeeded Qubilai in 1295, Ötemish Temür had an audience with the new qan, and was eventually assigned to be an agent at Ruzhou, in Henan Province.

Yue'ersiman's grandson, Alin Temür 阿鄰帖木兒 (fl. 1320–1330), was the third generation of this family to live in China proper. A transitional figure in this family's history, he was the first family member to become involved in the Chinese side of the Yuan civil administration.¹ Reiterating a theme found in numerous other prominent Uyghurs at the Yuan court, Alin Temür is lauded in this biography as being extraordinarily learned, and appears to have begun his official career during Ayurbarwada's reign (r. 1311–1320), with a posting to the important Hanlin Academy as a compiler of the first class (*Hanlin daizhi*). Further proof of Alin Temür's learning is then revealed later in the biography:

During Emperor Yingzong's reign [Shidebala qan, r. 1321–1323] he used his classical learning to serve officials at the court daily, explaining the good words and virtuous deeds of the ancestors and the ancient and previous wise kings. He translated various classics, recorded past events, and was given general supervision over royal princes and sons-in-law, and of matters relating to the court and meeting with [representatives of] other countries.²

¹ His transitional role in the family is also, interestingly enough, indicated by the format of his family's official biography in the *Yuanshi*; his section of the biography is separated from the preceding narrative by a clear break. I am not sure how much importance we can attribute to this format issue, but it is striking. See *Yuanshi* 124.3045.

² *Yuanshi* 124.3047–48.

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When Koshila was made emperor upon Tugh Temür's abdication in 1329 (he only reigned seven months in 1329), he retained Alin Temür as his personal tutor. He was also granted the honorary title Grandee of the Third Class (*Guanglu Dafu*, at rank 1b one of the highest honorary official titles in the Yuan bureaucracy) and was made a director of the emperor's Classics Colloquium (*jingyan*, an irregular gathering of high officials with the emperor in the palace to read and discuss various classic texts).

Some sense of Alin Temür's reputation as a literate Uyghur who approximated the Chinese ideal of the scholar-official can also be gained by reading descriptions of his appointments to office and other laudatory comments by the famous Chinese writers Yang Yu 楊瑀 (1285–1361) and Tao Zongyi 陶宗儀 (1316–1350s). Yang Yu reports a remark told to him by Alin Temür about a Tang Dynasty figure whom he took as a role model. According to Alin Temür, that man not only did not react when people spat on him, but let it dry by itself and considered this to be a virtuous act.³ The implication of Yang's story is that Alin Temür was a model of Confucian virtue who, in similar vein to the patient Tang Dynasty man, would not return violence for violence. Inasmuch as Alin Temür was one of his teachers, Yang did have good reason to write such laudatory stories about the man.⁴ It does, nonetheless, indicate Alin Temür's acceptance as a Chinese-style

³ See Yang Yu, *Shanju xinhua* 8a; and Franke, *Kulturgeschichte Chinas*, 44–45. The same passage appears in slightly shorter form in Tao Zongyi, *Chuogeng lu* 2.48–49. According to Herbert Franke, some forty-three passages from Yang Yu's text were used in Tao Zongyi's *Chuogeng lu*. See Herbert Franke, "Some Remarks on Yang Yü and his Shan-chü Hsin-hua," *Journal of Oriental Studies* 2.2 (1955): 302–08; rpt. in *China under Mongol Rule* (Brookfield: Variorum, 1994).

⁴ Franke, *Kulturgeschichte Chinas*, 44 n. 1, states that Alin Temür was one of Yang's teachers.

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literatus among some very famous Chinese writers and thinkers of the time.

Alin Temür had four sons, of whom his eldest, Shalaban 沙剌班 (fl. 1340s), carried on his father's precedent as a prestigious *Semuren* official and a Chinese-style literatus.⁵ Shalaban used the *yin* inheritance privilege accorded him by virtue of his father's high office to gain admission to the civil bureaucracy, one of the more common ways for recruitment to office during the period of Mongol rule of China.⁶ When emperor Toghon Temür issued an edict ordering the writing of the Song, Liao, and Jin dynastic histories, Shalaban was assigned as one of the editors of the *Jinshi*.⁷ He was eventually promoted to very high positions in the Yuan bureaucracy; he was a chancellor, or recipient of edicts, in the Hanlin Academy (*Hanlin chengzhi*), a privy councillor in the Central Secretariat (*Zhongshu pingzhang*), and a commissioner in the Bureau of Tibetan and Buddhist Affairs (*Xuanzheng yuanshi*). This last office may explain his Tibetan style name.

Shalaban was also a tutor for the last Yuan emperor, Toghon Temür (1333–1368), perhaps because of his high literary abilities. We know that he was well versed in

⁵ Alternative renderings of this name may include Shalpang or Shalawan. Peter Golden, personal communication. For more detailed information on Shalaban, see *Xin Yuanshi* 136.11b–12b; and Ch'en Yuan, *Western and Central Asians in China*, 166, 190. Franke believes that Shalaban is a Chinese rendering of the Tibetan name Šes-rab-dpal. See Franke, *Kulturgeschichte Chinas*, 66.

⁶ As Elizabeth Endicott-West points out, the *yin* privilege became the normal route for upward social mobility in Mongol China, and was designed specifically to favor Mongols and *Semuren* while keeping the Chinese, Qitans and Jurchens back. See her article "Hereditary Privilege in the Yüan Dynasty," *Journal of Turkish Studies* 9 (1985): 15–20.

⁷ See Ouyang Xuan, *Guizhai wenji* 13.4a–5b, for a list of the editors of the *Jinshi*.

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Chinese-style poetry and calligraphy.⁸ And even though he never adopted a Chinese style surname, he did possess two Chinese-style courtesy names (*zi*), *Weizhong* 惟中 and *Jingchen* 敬臣, and a literary name (*hao*), *Shanzhai* 山齋, which indicate that he participated in some Chinese literati circles.⁹ He would have been a good person to have as a tutor. We have been left an interesting glimpse into his role in the inner court in Yang Yu's record of an encounter between the emperor and his tutor, Shalaban:

The learned Shalaban was a tutor to the Emperor and was daily in his presence. One day, because he was tired he lay down in a hall that adjoined the Emperor's private quarters, and went fast asleep. The emperor personally came and placed a square pillow on which he had been sitting under his [Shalaban's]

⁸ Shalaban is listed among the Yuan calligraphers of repute in Tao Zongyi 陶宗儀, *Shushi huiyao* 書史會要 [Record of the history of calligraphy] (Siku Quanshu ed.; rpt. Taipei: Shangwu yinshu guan, 1980) 7.19. For a list of *Semuren* calligraphers included in Tao's book, see Ch'en Yuan, *Western and Central Asians in China*, 186–202.

⁹ Courtesy names were usually given to a person once they had reached adulthood, and were chosen to reflect and extend the meaning of one's personal name, or *ming*. A literary name was often given to or adopted by men who were writers of some sort, and was a sure sign of membership in the literati. His first courtesy name, *Weizhong*, was also used by two other important Yuan-era persons, a Mongol prince Dorji Bal 朵爾直班 (1314–1353), and Li Haowen 李好文 (fl. 1321–1350s). Both men had served in the Hanlin Academy and in the central administration around the time that Shalaban would have been posted there. His second courtesy name, *Jingchen*, was also used by Xu Shijing 許師敬 (fl. 1320s–1340s), fourth son of the famous Yuan thinker Xu Heng 許衡 (1209–1281), who was also an official in the Central Secretariat and the Hanlin Academy. For Dorji Bal, see Wang Deyi, et al., *Yuanren zhuanji* 4.2355; for Li Haowen 1.518–19; for Xu Shijing 2.1234. On the naming practice in traditional China, see Endymion Wilkinson, *Chinese History: A Manual, Revised and Enlarged* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2000), 98–105.

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head. He had also gotten a boil on the left side of his forehead at one point, and the Emperor personally took a gold box that contained fingered citron ointment (*foshou gao* 佛手膏), wiped some on a piece of paper and applied it to his forehead.¹⁰

Shalaban's positions as an official in Toghon's court and as a personal tutor to the emperor indicate that he was well respected as a *Semuren* official and also as a Chinese-style literatus. Thus, he conformed to the ideal of the scholar-official. His son, Śākya-dpal 世傑班 (1319–?), followed in the father's footsteps, being appointed as an official in the Hanlin Academy and in the Bureau of Ceremonies.¹¹ We know little more about this man, but his name certainly implies that this family took seriously their Tibetan and Buddhist affiliation.

This family's story provides some interesting insights into the ways in which the *Semuren* elite functioned in Mongol China. They did not have to totally accommodate to Chinese modes of social behavior in order to thrive; what mattered most was a man's proximity to the center of power. Induction into the qan's personal bodyguard was the usual first step, and if a man was fortunate, he ended up serving one of the more important members of the Mongol imperial clan. In this case, the first member of this family to serve the Mongols did so under Qubilai, and this had important ramifications for the status and success of his descendants as both political and social elites. The case for their success as political elites is self-evident from the sources. Their status as cultural elites is

¹⁰ See Yang Yu, *Shanju xinhua* 18b, translated by Franke, *Kulturgeschichte Chinas*, 66, under the title "Kaiser und Lehrer." Tu Ji's rendition of Shalaban's biography in *Mengwuer shiji* 45.2b–3a provides substantial additional information on his role in the court, none of which is attested in the Yuan-era sources.

¹¹ See Franke, *Kulturgeschichte Chinas*, 61 n. 4, for this rendering of his name.

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more complex, and their story reveals that success in that realm was not limited to accommodating solely to Chinese culture.

Alin Temür was obviously well schooled in the Chinese cultural tradition, since he headed up the emperor's Classics Colloquium. He was also respected by some very eminent Chinese thinkers of his day who saw him as a model of Confucian virtue. His son, Shalaban, was, if anything, even more involved in Chinese culture and was respected as a peer by prominent Chinese contemporaries. Not only was he an official in the Confucian-dominated Hanlin Academy, he was also a noted calligrapher and poet, both activities that were essential hallmarks of the traditional Chinese cultural elite.

Yet at the same time, these Uyghurs were anything but the ideal Chinese type of cultural elite. Their strong affiliation with Tibetan culture can be seen in the names and religious practices of several members of this family. No member of the family ever adopted a Chinese-style surname or personal name, even though some did have Chinese-style courtesy and literary names. Nor did any of them ever participate in the civil service examinations. Nevertheless, they occupied positions in the most important ideological bureaus at the Mongol court, such as the Hanlin Academy and the Imperial History Bureau, as well as the highest levels of the political administrative apparatus. So they must have felt quite as comfortable among the most conservative Chinese as they undoubtedly did among other foreigners.

Buyruq Qaya's Family – the Lian Family

We are fortunate to have even more primary sources documenting the history of Buyruq Qaya's family than we had for the heirs of Qara İghach Buyruq, and the patterns that emerge from those sources are quite similar to those seen above. Buyruq Qaya's descendants also managed to

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obtain prominent positions in the most influential ideological and political bureaus, and were equally at home among non-Chinese and Chinese groups. But there is also divergence from the patterns we saw in members of Qara Īghach Buyruq's family. Buyruq Qaya's family appears to have accommodated more to Chinese cultural norms than did Qara Īghach Buyruq's descendants, and in some important ways. The richness of the available sources also allow us to know a lot more about the kinds of marriages members of this family entered into. So they provide fascinating counterpoints and parallels to the example of Qara Īghach Buyruq's family.

As we have already seen above, Buyruq Qaya (1197–1265) had a long, successful career that began when he was put into service in the house of Tolui. He adopted the Chinese-style surname Lian to mark two auspicious events, the birth of his second son, Hindu 忻都, on the 25th day of the fifth month of 1231, and his appointment as a surveillance commissioner (*lianfang shi*) of Yunnan region (*Yunnan zhulu* 燕南諸路). Henceforth, most, but not all, of his descendants would be known by that name. Buyruq Qaya also hired tutors to educate his sons in Chinese style, and several of his thirteen sons and fifty-three grandsons were known for their Confucian learning and their artistic and literary accomplishments.

It is interesting that Buyruq Qaya, the first generation of his family to live and work in China and a contemporary of the *idiqu* Barchuq, invested in a Chinese education for his sons and chose to use a Chinese-style surname. The Mongols were still consolidating their hold on north China in the early 1230s and had little reason to be interested in Chinese culture or institutions at that point. But Buyruq was drawn to Chinese culture, no doubt having already become somewhat familiar with it as a member of the Uyghuristan aristocracy. He was also undoubtedly a savvy man who understood the importance of

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accommodating to his new cultural surroundings in China, to his and his family's long-term success.

Whether out of genuine interest in Chinese culture or due to the smart strategy of a prescient man, Chinese education for the sons paid off handsomely for Buyruq Qaya's family. All of his sons and most of their descendants served as *Semuren* officials in the civil bureaucracy, and several also became Chinese-style literati. Buyruq's second son, Hindu, better known by his Chinese name Lian Xixian 廉希憲 (1231–1280), best exemplifies this trend.¹²

Lian Xixian began his climb up the political ladder as a *Semuren* official by being inducted into prince

¹² Lian Xixian is the most well known member of this family and the subject of several important studies. Primary sources documenting his life that are used here include his official biography in *Yuanshi* 126.3085–98; his spirit-way inscription, written by Han Xing 韓性 (1266–1341, a.k.a. Ming Shan 明善), “Pingzhang zhengshi Lian Wenzhengwang shendaobei” 平章政事廉文正王神道碑 [The spirit-way inscription of Prince Lian Wenzheng, Privy Councillor], in Su Tianjue 蘇天爵 (1294–1352) comp., *Yuan Wenlei* 元文類 [Categorized literature of the Yuan Dynasty] (Siku Quanshu ed.; rpt. Shanghai: Shanghai Guji chubanshe, 1993) 65.1a–18b, pp. 848–57; and Su Tianjue, “Pingzhang Lian Wenzheng wang” 平章廉文正王 [Prince Lian Wenzheng, Privy Councillor], in *Yuanchao mingchen shilue* 元朝名臣事略 [Biographies of prominent Yuan Dynasty officials] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1996) 7.124–42. The Lian clan was one of the most prominent *Semuren* clans in Mongol China, demonstrated by the fact that three family members were accorded biographical entries in the *Yuanshi*, and by the many funerary inscriptions, poems, prefaces, and other pieces in honor of members of this family by prominent Chinese writers of the time. For a detailed list of those sources, the reader should consult the entries on Lian family members compiled by Wang Deyi, et al., *Yuanren zhuanji* 3.1504–11. For secondary scholarship on this family, see especially Hsiao Ch'i-ch'ing, “Lien Hsi-Hsien (1231–1280)”; Ch'en Yuan, *Westerners and Central Asians in China*, Ch. 2; and Wang Meitang, “Yuandai neiqian Weiwuerzu shijia – Lianshi jiazuo kaoshu”.

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Qubilai's bodyguard when he was fourteen years old. One of the first qualities that his biography notes about him is his passion for learning in general and towards the Chinese Confucian tradition in particular. "Xixian was extraordinarily fond of the Chinese classics and history, such that he was never without a book" (*Xixian duhao jingshi, shou bushi juan* 希憲篤好經史，手不釋卷).¹³ It was undoubtedly because of his aptitude for learning that he was allowed to study with the famous Chinese scholar Wang E 王鶚 (1190–1273), who had been summoned by Prince Qubilai to Qarakhorum in 1244 as one of his Confucian advisors.¹⁴ It was while serving Prince Qubilai at the Mongol capital that Lian Xixian gained his famous nickname Lian Mencius (Lian Mengzi 廉孟子). According to his biography, one day when reading Mencius he was summoned by the Prince and he rushed into the Prince's quarters in a hurry with the book in his hands. Qubilai, on seeing the book, asked him to explain Mencius's teachings, and Xixian then complied, telling him about the essential correctness of Mencius's teachings on the innate goodness of man, righteousness and self interest, benevolence and violence.¹⁵

But Lian Xixian was not simply a scholar; he also demonstrated his skills in archery before Qubilai Qan, and accompanied Qubilai on several military campaigns, against the Dali Kingdom in 1253, against the southern

¹³ *Yuanshi* 126.3085. In fact, Ch'en Yuan asserts that Lian Xixian was one of the *Semuren* who was a "pure Confucianist." See Ch'en, *Westerners and Central Asians in China*, 21.

¹⁴ See Wang Deyi, et al., *Yuanren zhuanji* 1.145–46; Hok-lam Chan, "Wang O (1190–1273)," *Papers on Far Eastern History* 12 (1975): 43–70; and his more recent "Wang E (1190–1273)," in *In the Service of the Khan*, 300–15.

¹⁵ The text reads: "Shizu wen qishuo, sui yi xingshan yili renbao zhizhi weidui, Shizu jiazhi, muyue Lian Mengzi" (世祖問其說，遂以性善義利仁暴之旨爲對，世祖嘉之，目曰廉孟子); *Yuanshi* 126.3085.

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Song in 1258, and against Qubilai's rival Ariq Böke in western China (Shanxi and Sichuan) in 1260. We get a better sense of Xixian's military training by looking at his actions in western China as a pacification commissioner. In 1254 he was sent as a pacification commissioner (*xuanfu shi*) to Qubilai's appanage lands in Jingzhao 京兆 (present-day Xi'an), and then subsequently went to western Shaanxi in 1254 and then to Shanxi and Sichuan in 1260 in the same capacity.¹⁶ These were important assignments, since Qubilai's younger brother, Ariq Böke, was contesting Qubilai's claim to the position of grand qan after the death of their elder brother and grand qan, Möngke, by fomenting trouble in western China.

Lian Xixian displayed his talent for military leadership as pacification commissioner by a series of brilliant maneuvers that resulted in Qubilai's hold on the area and his victory over Ariq Böke. As a result of his decisive leadership, Xixian was promoted several times to important offices in the region until he was recalled to the Mongol court for positions in the central government in 1263.

Xixian was assigned the prestigious position of one of the privy councilors (*zhongshu pingzhang zhengshi*) in Qubilai Qan's court in 1263.¹⁷ This position ranked just below the grand councilor of government affairs, and during his tenure Xixian participated in crafting several important policy decisions aimed at establishing a proper chain of command and a rational hierarchy of power within the Yuan bureaucracy. At the same time he also continued to act as a personal advisor to Qubilai Qan.

¹⁶ See Hsiao, "Lien Hsi-Hsien (1231–1280)," 483–87, for a description of Xixian's duties and accomplishments as pacification commissioner in these areas.

¹⁷ Also known as director of political affairs in the Secretarial Council. See Hsiao, "Lien Hsi-Hsien (1231–1280)," 488.

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One of the policy decisions that Xixian was instrumental in enacting during Qubilai's reign was reorganization of local administrations so that they would be appointed and controlled by the central government. This was in part a response to problems connected with the old appanage system put in place in north China by Qubilai's predecessors, whereby a Mongol prince and his family ruled their appanage territory as a personal fiefdom, exercising civil, military and fiscal powers over their lands. Seeing the limitations this imposed on the power of the central government, Xixian advocated that the best way for the Yuan court to control activities (especially the all-important tasks of tax collection and organization of armies) at the local level was by central appointment of local-level officials. In order to effect this change, and to provide a way for Confucian-oriented Chinese men to serve in government, Xixian recommended establishment of a system of annual nominations of local men who were experts in Confucian studies and in clerical duties to the central government (*suigong ruli*). He also understood the need for oversight of this system and recommended that the traditional Chinese censorial system be restored to the central government, which eventually occurred in 1268.

Running just below the surface of Xixian's government reforms was his dedication to Confucian values and his determination to see that value system become part of Yuan governance.¹⁸ We have already seen

¹⁸ As Hsiao points out, Xixian's request that the censorial system be restored was part of a wider conflict between Confucian advisors and officials and the Muslim Ahmad, who was in charge of financial affairs under Qubilai. Xixian's personal involvement in this dispute against Ahmad ended up costing him a good portion of his career; he was probably forced to retire from office in 1270, and when he was brought back into service four years later, was given positions away from the court. See Hsiao, "Lien Hsi-Hsien (1231–1280)," 491–96. On Ahmad, see Herbert Franke, "AHMAD (?–1282)," in *In the Service of the Khan*, 539–57.

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ample evidence of his early attraction to Confucianism, and Xixian's abiding concern as a member of Qubilai's central secretariat seems to have been to preserve and enlarge the role that Confucian scholar-officials played in government. To enact his program, Xixian recommended or appointed to office several prominent Chinese, all of whom were also Confucian scholars.¹⁹ Xixian's reaction to the death of his parents also stands out as testimony to his Confucian persuasion.

In the first year of the Chih-yüan era [1264 A.D.] his mother died. Lien led members of his family and near of kin in following ancient rites of mourning. For three days he took no food or drink. Occasionally he vomited blood and could not get up. He slept on straw and lived in a cottage beside his mother's grave. The authorities considered that as the mourning system had not yet been adopted, he should be strongly urged to emerge from retirement. Several officials went together to call on him at his hut. When they heard the sounds of his bitter lamentations, they hesitated to broach the subject. Shortly afterwards, a decree was issued ordering him into service. Though he did not dare to disobey, yet, when he appeared for duty he was clad in plain clothes, and when he went home, he changed to mourning attire. At the time of his father's death, he did likewise.²⁰

This passage in Xixian's official biography paints a picture of a dedicated Confucianist who followed Chinese mourning customs well before they were instituted by the Mongol authorities as law in Yuan China in 1304. His practice is especially interesting in light of the fact that Uyghurs were specifically admonished in Yuan law to

¹⁹ See Hsiao, "Lien Hsi-Hsien (1231–1280)," 498, for a list of the Chinese Confucianists appointed to office by Xixian.

²⁰ *Yuanshi* 126.3090, tr. by Ch'en Yuan, *Westerners and Central Asians in China*, 245. This passage is part of Ch'en's discussion of *Semuren* who followed Chinese mourning rituals, see pp. 241–52.

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follow their own native burial customs.²¹ Upon Xixian's own death at age forty-nine in 1280, Mongols and Chinese alike mourned him, and several prominent Chinese wrote elegies and poems in his honor.

Lian Xixian had twelve siblings, all of whom also served as *Semuren* officials in civil and military affairs. The striking variation in their careers underlines the multivalent skills and resources martialed by this Uyghur family. For example, Xixian's younger brother, Lian Xishu 廉希恕 (fl. 1280s–1290s; also known by his Uyghur name Bulmish Qaya 不魯迷失海牙), was assigned the position of Second Privy Councilor in the central government in 1284 (*zhongshu canzhi zhengshi*), where he was in charge of political affairs. In 1291 he was sent to south China with the concurrent duties as a pacification commissioner and general military commander (*xuanwei shi du yuanshuai*) over the Haibei and Hainan circuit in Huguang Province (*Haibei Hainandao* 海北海南道). The Mongols had established eight of these special military regions in China, two in Huguang Province, to maintain control over especially troublesome areas. Lian Xishu's position there highlights his military training and administrative skills.

Another of Xixian's siblings, Lian Xigong 希貢 (fl. 1290s), had quite a different career path. In 1299 he was appointed as a secretarial censor in the “southern pavilion” of the Yuan censorate (*nantai zhishu yushi*). At some point he was also appointed as a grand academician in the Institute for the Glorification of Literature (*zhaowen guan daxueshi*). Xigong must certainly have gained a reputation as a learned man who specialized in the Chinese literary and cultural arts, especially to have been appointed to the

²¹ Francis Cleaves interprets this legal injunction as solicitude by the Mongols towards their Uyghur subjects, since their mourning practices were being contaminated by Chinese ways. See his “Uighuric Mourning Regulations,” *Journal of Turkish Studies* 1 (1977): 65–93.

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latter position; this view is confirmed by the fact that he is listed among the men who were experts in calligraphy in China.²²

Curiously, Buyruq Qaya's youngest son never adopted a Chinese-style name. He is known to us only by his Uyghur name, Arghun Qaya 阿魯渾海牙, and all that we know of this man is that he served as an agent (*darughachi*) in Guangde Prefecture (*Guangdelu* 廣德路), in Jiangzhe Province. We would, in fact, not have heard about him at all if not for his prominent son, Lian Qashan Qaya 廉惠山海牙 (fl. 1321–1360s).²³ Unlike his father, he adopted the Lian surname but also used a distinctly Uyghur personal name. As we can see from a brief survey of his career, Qashan Qaya was known for his literary abilities, and he certainly fits the mold of a typical Chinese style scholar-official.

Qashan Qaya took and successfully passed his *jinshi* examination in 1321, whereupon he was assigned as an official in one of the provincial censorates. In 1328 he assumed duties in the Imperial Library (*mishujian cheng*), and in 1344 became one of four editors of the Liao Dynastic History (*Liaoshi* 遼史), a position that was attached to the Hanlin Academy as a chancellor and academician (*Hanlin xueshi chengzhi*).²⁴ In 1361 he was sent to Jiangzhe Province (*Jiangzhe xingsheng* 江浙行省) as a director in the Bureau of Tibetan and Buddhist Affairs (*xuanzheng yuanshi*).

Buyruq Qaya's descendants were numerous; he had at least eleven sons and each of them seems to have had at

²² Tao Zongyi, *Shushi huiyao* 7.17. Also see Ch'en Yuan, *Westerners and Central Asians in China*, 187.

²³ On Lian Qashan Qaya, see his official biography, *Yuanshi* 145.3447–48; and his entry in Wang Deyi, et al., *Yuanren zhuanji* 3.1509–10.

²⁴ Another famous Uyghur, Shalaban, was also part of this project, assigned to be an editor of the Jin Dynastic History.

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least one son, and many several. Moreover, the vast majority of the Lian family members whom we know about had successful careers as prominent *Semuren* officials, and some of them were also known as Chinese-style literati. Space does not permit us to discuss each of those men here, but we can see from this brief survey that this extended family undoubtedly profited by Buyruq Qaya's association with the Uyghur *idikut* and his own high positions as a member of the Uyghur diaspora elite under the Mongols (see the Lian genealogical chart on p. 271). Before leaving this family, however, we need to briefly highlight two specific strategies that they used to ensure their continuing status as elites in Mongol China: the selection of a Chinese style surname and marriage alliances.

We know that Buyruq Qaya adopted Lian as his family's surname to celebrate his appointment as a surveillance commissioner and the birth of his second son. But why would a powerful *Semuren* official like Buyruq Qaya have felt any need to adopt a Chinese style surname at all? After all, he was part of the first wave of Uyghurs whose power came from his relationship with the Mongol imperial family and not from any association with Chinese men or culture. Was Buyruq aware that a Chinese style surname would benefit his descendants? Perhaps he foresaw the inevitable necessity of the foreign ruling elite accommodating to Chinese institutions and personnel in order to maintain their own power in China? We know he was attracted to Chinese cultural norms to the extent that he hired Chinese tutors for his sons, and perhaps he felt that using a Chinese style surname was part of that upbringing? Whatever his motives, the surname Lian did not hurt, and may have helped the acceptance of his offspring by prominent Chinese peers. As we shall see, it was a practice taken up by other *Semuren*.

But the adoption of this surname was not simply a matter of accommodating to Chinese cultural norms. Lian

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was an uncommon but not unknown Chinese surname and it appears that it was only used by members of this extended family after the Yuan era. The origin of the name in an office whose function and purpose was to provide surveillance over other officials and the local population in an area of northern China recently conquered by the Mongols could not help but remind Buyruq Qaya's descendants, as well as their Chinese acquaintances, of his prominent place within the conquering elite.²⁵ Thus, this name also undoubtedly continued to remind later generations of this family of their Uyghur heritage.

The personal names of various members of Buyruq Qaya's family also reveal a complex strategy of identity. Buyruq Qaya took what seems a very Chinese approach to assigning personal names to his sons; they were all given bisyllabic personal names that began with the character Xi 希 ("to desire, hope for, or excel"), similar to the Chinese tradition of using a specific character as a generational marker. Lian Xixian also adhered to this Chinese tradition, giving each of his six sons a monosyllabic personal name of auspicious meaning (Fu 孚, a.k.a. Yi 怡, Ke 恪, Xun 恂, Chen 忱, Heng 恆, and Dun 惇).²⁶

²⁵ The name Lian was borrowed from a bureau first invented in the Northern Song era to maintain relations between the frontier zone and the Song court: Charles O. Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985; rpt. Taipei: Southern Materials Center, 1988), 312. But Lian had been used in earlier eras as a surname as well. See Chen Menglei 陳夢雷, Jiang Tingxi 蔣廷錫, Yang Jialuo 楊家駟, and Long Jidong 龍繼棟, comp., "Shizu dian" 氏族典 [Records of family and clan names], in *Gujin Tushu Jicheng* 古今圖書集成 [Imperial encyclopedia], 79 vols. (Shanghai: Zhonghua shuju, 1934; rpt. Taipei: Dingwen shuju, 1977) 36.3289 for examples of earlier people in China named Lian.

²⁶ His first son, known by both names, was the only son from his first wife, the daughter of the Uyghur official and personal friend, Mengsus, who also bore him three daughters who married prominent officials of the day. His second wife, a Jurchen woman, gave birth to his other five

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At the same time that these names reinforced close association of this Uyghur family with Chinese culture, other members of the lineage continued to use more traditional Uyghur names, as, for example, Buyruq Qaya's second youngest son, Arqun Qaya.²⁷ The fact that his son was given the Lian surname may indicate that Arqun Qaya had adopted a strategy of naming similar to Buyruq Qaya. But there are other examples where Lian men of subsequent generations continued to use Uyghur personal names, and these are more difficult to explain. For example, Buyruq Qaya's third son, Lian Xishu 希恕 (fl. 1280s–1290s), named his one son Lian Quduq Baqa 廉忽都八哈 (fl. 1320s), and that man's son, in turn, was named Lian Anian Baqa 廉阿年八哈 (fl. 1340s).²⁸ Other Lian men active as *Semuren* officials in the same time period as Xixian's sons had personal names that used the Uyghur term Qaya 海牙: e.g., Lian Shoushan Qaya 壽山海牙 (fl. 1320s), Lian Tujian Qaya 秃堅海牙 (fl. 1320s), Lian Axili Qaya 阿息力海牙 (fl. 1330s).²⁹ Use of this common Uyghur name as part of their personal names indicates at the very least that they continued to realize some aspects of

sons and three daughters. It is interesting to note that his sons' names all begin with the heart radical, which may have been Xixian's way of inserting a generational marker that would distinguish his sons from other Lian family members of any generation. These are also the kinds of names with lofty meanings that any good Chinese would have given to his son.

²⁷ Some of the sources indicate this man was adopted by Buyruq Qaya after his own father, Buyruq Qaya's brother, died prematurely. This would explain why he never took the Lian surname.

²⁸ See Wang Meitang, "Lianshi jiazhu kaoshu," for information on these later generations of Lian men.

²⁹ See Wang Meitang, "Lianshi jiazhu kaoshu," 12, for information on these individuals. It is impossible to verify into which branch of the Lian family these men were born. Moreover, while Wang does not argue that these men were all siblings, the naming convention is striking, and suggests generational or sibling association.

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their Uyghur heritage, and while we cannot be sure, this naming convention may also have been adopted because they were all siblings.

The Lian clan history also provides good examples of the ways that marriage alliances were used to cement ties within the Uyghur diaspora community in China.³⁰ For example, Buyruq Qaya's eldest son, Lian Ximin 廉希閔 (fl. 1250s), married a daughter of the prominent Uyghur *Semuren*, Guan Zhige 貫只哥 (fl. 1270s).³¹ We have already commented on Lian Xixian's wives; his first was a daughter of the prominent Uyghur, Mengsus. That marriage was probably arranged between fathers, since we know that Buyruq Qaya and Mengsus both served Prince Tolui and his wife as advisors and appanage managers. This would have been an excellent way for these two families to join to their mutual political benefit, as well as to maintain their Uyghur cultural identity. But these Uyghurs also married more broadly within the *Semuren* community. For example, Xixian's second wife was from an important Jurchen family.

Buyruq's third son, Lian Xishu 希恕, married a woman from another important Uyghur clan, the Gusulu clan. Further cementing the Uyghur ties of this branch of

³⁰ See Hong Jinfu 洪金富, "Yuandai Hanren yu fei Hanren tonghun wenti chutan" 元代漢人與非漢人通婚問題初探 [A study of the problem of marriage between Chinese and non-Chinese people in the Yuan Dynasty], *Shihuo Yuekan* 食貨月刊 6.12 (1977): 647–65, 7.1–2 (1977): 11–131; and discussion in Wang Meitang, "Lianshi jiazhu kaoshu."

³¹ Guan Zhige was the father of the famous Uyghur poet Sewinch Qaya 小雲石海涯 (also known by his Chinese name of Guan Yunshi 貫雲石) (1286–1324), who, in similar fashion to the Xie and Lian families, adopted a Chinese-style surname; Guan was the first syllable of his father's name. On Guan Yunshi and his family, see Yang Tsung-han, "Hsiao-Yün-Shih Khaya," *Monumenta Serica* 9 (1944): 92–100; and Richard John Lynn, *Kuan Yün-Shih* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1980).

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the Lian family, Lian Xishu's wife's sister was married to Xie Zhedu, one of the descendants of the Gaochang Bilge Buqa. One of Lian Xixian's grandsons, a certain Lian Yaoyao 廉咬咬 (fl. 1340s), also married into that family.³²

Conclusion

The descendants of Qara Īghach Buyruq and Buyruq Qaya did not all follow the same route to success, let alone define success in the same way. But the stories of both of these prominent *Semuren* clans enable us to understand how those people created simultaneous identities as political and social elites, and the benefits that accrued to them when they straddled that gap between subjects and masters. They had access to the same routes of upward mobility as the Mongols, such as induction into the qan's personal bodyguard and inheritance of hereditary office. But they also took advantage of other approaches, including the civil service exams and Confucian learning. Each approach required specific strategies and resources, and the diverse resources of some Uyghurs allowed them to advance up both political and social ladders in China.

Naming practices especially reveal the multiple strategies and agendas of the Uyghur *Semuren*. The practice of adopting a Chinese-style surname and personal name was followed by many *Semuren*, including Uyghurs. There were several different strategies that a non-Chinese person used for adopting a surname, including taking a common Chinese surname, using the first character of a personal name (a *ming*) or a term from a person's official title, or a character that evoked some other aspect of that man's family history. Of course, many *Semuren* chose to retain their original names and we have many examples of

³² The marriages between Lian and Xie family members undoubtedly occurred due to the fact that several Lian men were officials in Liyang County, Jiangsu, where the Xie family had settled. See Chapter Seven for further discussion of this link.

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foreign names persisting throughout the Yuan Dynasty (in fact the first Ming emperor required all *Semuren* to adopt Chinese style surnames). But many other *Semuren* also adopted Chinese style surnames.³³ Why?

The reasons that drove adoption of a Chinese style surname were undoubtedly as varied as the ways they were created. Some people did it ostensibly to honor their ancestors while others claimed it was done in order to keep track of their family's history. A Chinese style surname would also have helped the efforts of a non-Chinese man to interact with and be taken seriously by his Chinese *shidafu* peers, especially if he spoke mainly or only Chinese.

Buyruq Qaya's descendants survived splendidly as political and social elites in Mongol China without having to accommodate themselves to Chinese cultural norms to the extent that they adopted Chinese-style surnames and personal names. But other Uyghurs like the Lian clan took a different approach to their situation. In the end, the descendants of both of these clans circulated at the highest levels of political and social power in China, and their status in both arenas extended the prestige of the *Semuren* status group beyond narrower ethnic, social and geographic boundaries. The descendants of the Uyghur State Minister Bilge Buqa best exemplify these strategies and this evolution of the *Semuren* group, and it is to that clan that we now turn.

³³ There seems to have been no commonly accepted opinion among the important Chinese writers of the period about the permissibility or acceptance of the practice by *Semuren* of adopting a Chinese style surname. Chinese thinkers and writers were often involved in the process of a *Semuren* family choosing a surname. We also have statements from other prominent Chinese writers who opposed the practice. For examples, see Ch'en Yuan, *Western and Central Asians in China*, 226–41.