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— ZEKİ VELİDİ TOGAN'IN HATIRASINA ARMAĞAN —

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Arab relations with Tibet in the 8th and early 9th centuries A.D.

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The notices about Tibet and the Tibetans in Islamic sources of the early period are not well known and are somewhat difficult of interpretation. But they are interesting in themselves, and it has seemed fitting to put together the more tractable of them along with a few Chinese records to eke them out in this Volume of tribute to our late friend, Zeki Validi, as his friends liked to call him, was always interested in this kind of enquiry, on the outskirts, so to say, of Islam — as witness his admirable edition of the Rihlah of Ibn Faḍlān, and I recall at least one conversation with him on the subject.

The recently published English translation of a book by R. A. Stein, contains a brief reference to Tibetans and Arabs in the Caliphate of Hārūn ar-Rashid (170/786-193/809), which serves to remind us that in the great days of their empire the Arabs were in contact not only with Central Asia and India but also with the peoples of the Far East. The notice concerning ar-Rashid is in the annals of the T’ang dynasty (A.D. 618-907), to the effect that in 798 his embassy reached the T’ang court, presumably at Ch’ang-an, called by the Arabs Khumdān, and that its members performed the kowtow, which an earlier Arab embassy had refused. On this rather slender basis an alliance at this time of Arabs and Chinese against the Tibetans is often spoken of in the secondary authorities.

1 The best account is W. Barthold, art. Tibet, Enc. of Islam, edn. I, which brings the history down to the Mongol period and beyond.
2 The notices of Tibet in Ḥudud al-Ālam and al-Idrīṣī are not here dealt with at length but see some remarks infra.
The embassy of 798 appears to be unrecorded by the Arab historians, and the same applies to some twenty Arab missions to the court of China between 716 and 759, reported by Chavannes and discussed by the late Sir Hamilton Gibb in an early article. The possible reasons for this silence need not be gone into here, and it is practically certain, as Professor Gibb emphasized, that not all these missions came from the court of the Caliph. As regards their purpose, Professor Gibb had this to say: 'Conjecture has often been made as to the purpose and scope of these embassies, but only two reasons seem at all likely. They may have had political objectives, e.g. an alliance or understanding against their common enemy, the Western Turks. Or they may have been commercial missions, intended to foster trade relations, particularly in the matter of the overland silk trade. The frequent association of Arab embassies with those of Samarkand and other regions of Transoxania makes it almost certain that the second reason is the correct one in many cases, though other of the embassies may well have had political motives'. It will be noticed that no mention is here made of Tibet, and that the common enemy of the Arabs and Chinese spoken of are the West Turks. But this cannot apply to the latter part of the period 716-759, for, as Professor Gibb says elsewhere, towards 740 after the defeat of the Türkesh the last remaining power of the West Turks disappears.

Whether or not the embassy of 798 directly concerned the Tibetans remains uncertain in defect of positive evidence, but that this or others of them did is quite likely. Relations both of war and peace between Arabs and Tibetans are occasionally mentioned by Arabic authors as well as in the Chinese annals. After the consolidation of the Lhasa kingdom and the adoption of Buddhism in the 7th century A.D. the Tibetans were specially aggressive, and made their presence felt on the upper waters of the Indus, in Chinese Turkestan and in China itself. Among their astonishing exploits outside of Tibet were the occupation of the 'Four Garrisons' (Kucha, Kashghar, Yarkand and Kokand in Turkestan) in the second half of the 7th century, the subjection of the Pala kings of Bengal


7 E. Chavannes, Documents sur les T'ou-k'uei (Turcs) occidentaux, and especially Notes additionnelles sur les T'ou-k'uei (Turcs) occidentaux, originally published in T'oung Pao, V, 1904, later together with the Documents, Paris, n.d. (Adrien Maisonneuve).


12 Stein, Tibetan Civilization, 60, 64, cf. Shakabpa, Tibet, 30.
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(circa 755)^13, and a little later (763) the capture of Ch'ang-an (Sian in Shensi province), then the capital of the T'ang dynasty^14. The apparent paradox of Tibetan aggressiveness in all directions after their acceptance of Buddhism has been explained as due to encouragement given by the new central authority at Lhasa to outlying Tibetan tribes to direct their attention to external conquest rather than to the south of the country and Lhasa itself^15. However this may be, it is no doubt significant that the Arabic historical sources mention Tibet especially in the 8th century, and that thereafter the name appears to be recessive.

We may leave out of consideration the fabulous tales connecting Tibet (usually at-Tubbat, with the article) with the Biblical history (at-Tubbat is a son or grandson of Japheth), with Dhūl-Qarnain (Alexander the Great), with a Tubba of the Yemen, who is supposed to give his name to the country, or with Sāsānid rulers. Predating the rise of Tibet as a unified kingdom in the 7th century and giving the widest scope to fantasy, these are practically valueless, though in one tale, the date of which borders on the historical period (it purports to give an account of presents to Khusrau Anūshirvān) we have an indication, surely thought up after the event, of the warlike part which the Tibetans were presently to play in Asia. To Anūshirvān, on the occasion of his completing a wall, doubtless the famous Wall of Darband^16, come rich gifts from his fellow-rulers. These include from 'the king of at-Tubbatān and the eastern parts of the earth bordering on as-Ṣin and al-Hind... of the marvels exported from the land of Tubbat 100 coats-of-mail, 100 girt bucklers (turs) and 4000 bags of musk^17, i.e. typical products of Tibet a century or two later^18. The shields of the Tibetans meet us again in more than one place, in Ibn al-Faqīh (shortly after 289/902), where he mentions musk and shields (daraq) as the special products of Tibet^19, and in a passage of Ibn Ḥauqal where he adds to al-Iṣṭakhrī's enthusiastic description of Bukhara as seen from the citadel, that the castles in the surrounding country are 'like Tibetan bucklers' (talāḫu al-qusṭār fīmā bain dhālikā kā't-tirās al-Tub-

13 Stein, ibid., 60. For contact between a Pala king and the Abbāsid court somewhat later see my article A Diplomatic Exchange between al-Ma'mūn and an Indian King in the forthcoming volume in honour of Professor A.S. Atiya.
14 Stein, ibid., 65; Shakabpa, ibid., 39ff (quotes a Tibetan inscription in Lhasa).
17 Al-Ghazālī, Maṭālīl al-Bidār fi Manāzīl as-Sūrūr, written before 815/ 1412, citing Ibn Badrūn (circa 558/1163), as given by Sāmī ad-Dahhhān in Appendix 18 to his edn. of the K. al-Tubāl waʿl-Hadīyyā of the Khaledīyīn.
18 It is perhaps not surprising that silk is scarcely mentioned among the products reaching the West from Tibet.
19 Ed. De Goeje, 255.
batīyah), a clear indication that at the time they were well known²⁰.

A notice for 85/704 is given by ʿal-Ṭabarī²¹ (less fully by al-Baladhuri)²² according to which, at a time of dissension among the Arab invaders of Transoxiana, an attack was made upon them at Tirmidh, an important Oxus crossing (now Termez), by a combined force of Hayāṭī (Hephthalites), Tibetans (at-Tubbat) and Turks. The defence of the town was made good with great loss to the attackers, for whom the figure of 70,000 is mentioned. This, the historian notes, was the number of those who wore helmets with a tapering top or crest (baʿdah dhāt qūnas). The remainder, without helmets, or who wore ‘smooth helmets’ (baʿdah jamā’u) were uncounted, or perhaps innumerable (la yuḍūna). Some of these troops were easily repulsed from a breach in the wall of Tirmidh by 300 mailed cavalry of the Muslims, whose horses were similarly protected (muṣaffā, i.e. wearing the tijāf or cataphract of the time). Al-Baladhuri’s short account, which omits mention of the Tibetans and gives no estimate of number, implies that the attack on the Muslims was made from within the town. This is contradicted by ʿal-Ṭabarī’s description of the fighting, and especially by his mentioning ‘Ṭarkhūn, king of Bukhara’ as in command of the allies. The action in fact should represent a large-scale movement on the part of the natives of Transoxiana against the Arabs. In view of the lack of details, not much can be made of the reference to Tibetans, e.g. we cannot assume that either type of head-armour mentioned in the passage, or absence of head-armour, was characteristically Tibetan. Yet it seems that we have to think of a contingent from Tibet or the adjacent regions called upon, in circumstances unknown, to join in the general defence of Transoxiana.

In 715, less than a dozen years after the combined assault on Tirmidh, the Tibetans are reported by a Chinese source as again in Transoxiana, this time in alliance with the Arabs against Farghānah. The allies appointed a new king of Farghānah, called in the source A-leao-ta. The previous king, who had been under Chinese control, or enjoyed Chinese support, fled eastward to Kucha. A-leao-ta was defeated some time later, apparently in the Kashgar territory, by a Chinese army²³. Nothing or this appears in the Arabic sources, and it is difficult to connect these events with Qutasibah b. Muslim, who then governed Transoxiana for the Arabs²⁴.

²¹ Annales, II, ii, 3153-54.
²² K. Fuzāʿī al-Buldān, ed. Ṣaʿīd ad-Dīn at-Munajjid, 515.
²³ Chavannes, Documents, 148, n. 3.
As to the route between Transoxiana and Tibet, contact was evidently made for the most part by way of Badakhshan, the province lying east of Khuttal in the great bend of the Oxus (Amu Darya). It may have extended still further east across the Oxus. In the modern map the region lying immediately to the east of the Oxus bend, in medieval times called Shiqinán, is designated Badakhshan. From Badakhshan the road ran through Wakhi, i.e. the modern Vakhsh corridor, then through the Baroghil and Darkot passes by Gilgit to Baltistan and Ladakh, i.e. south of the Karakoram, or else north of the Karakoram following the Kashghar road so far, then turning southward through the Karakoram pass. From Wakhi to Tibet is 'near' or 'a near distance' Al-Idrisi says it is a journey of 18 days. From Badakhshan are brought garnets and lapis-lazuli, which come from mines in the mountains there. Musk reaches it by way of Wakhi from Tuchbat. According to Ibn al-Faqih, Badakhshan is the entrance to Tibet (madkhel an-nās ilā 'l-Tubbat). Yaqūt says explicitly that it is from Badakhshan that the merchants enter Tibet (arḍ al-Tubbat). Al-Yaqūbī has also something to say on this subject. After explaining the sea-route to China, he continues, 'Whoever wishes to go China by land, travels by way of the river of Bakh (Oxus), crossing the lands of as-Sughd, Farghānah, ash-Shāsh and Tibet, till he reaches it. The routing appears vague. Ash-Shāsh (Tashkent) comes before Farghānah as one travels east. The road to Kashghar seems indicated, but this is a long way from Tibet proper. Possibly Tibetan installations in Chinese Turkestan are intended. Al-Yaqūbī is more precise in the Kitāb al-Buldān, where at the end of a notice of Bakh and its region he mentions a town (madinah) of Badakhshan and a 'town called Jirm, which is the last of the towns east of Bakh in the direction of Tibet (balad at-Tubbat).

The approach was by way of the Gate of Tibet (Dar-i Tuchbat), 'a valley where a gate stands on a mountain', guarded by Muslims. There was also a Gate

25 I.e. Gorno Badakhshan, A.O.
29 Al-Iṣṭakhrī, 280.
30 Ed. De Goeje, 322.
32 Historiae, ed. Houtsma, I, 207.
34 Ed. De Goeje, 288.
of the Arabs (Dar-i Tâziyân), mentioned separately in Ḥudūd al-ʿĀlam. Minorsky suggested that the gate of Tibet may be ‘another aspect’ of the gate of the Arabs. No figure seems to be given for the distance between Baktshān and Wakhkhan but from Balkh to Baktshān was 13 days, according to al-Masʿūdī, who is less likely to be correct, about 20 days. It was also 13 days ‘by the course of the Oxus in a straight line’ from Baktshān to Tirmidh.

A little later than the episode at Farghānah already mentioned we hear of envoys of Tibet (wuṭuḍ at-Tubbāt) visiting Jarrāb b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Ḥakāmī, then governor of Khurasān, where is not stated, with a request that someone be sent to them to explain Islam. The proposal was accepted, with or without reference to the Caliph ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, and a certain as-Salīṭ b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Ḥanafī was sent to Tibet. We hear nothing of what happened to the mission but there is no doubt that, first introduced now, i.e. about the year 100/718, or at a later date, Islam made some progress in Tibet. Apart from notices of the qiblah of the people of Tibet and the mosque at Lhasa (see below), this is principally shown by the existence among the Tibetans of an era called Mekha-gya-ntsho, a period of 403 years beginning with the time when the Muḥammadans entered Mecca. While there is some uncertainty here, since the Muḥammadan entry into Mecca would most naturally refer to the events of 630 A. D., when Prophet returned in triumph, shortly before his death, to his native city, it would seem that the Hijrah era dating from 622, the year of Muḥammed’s flight to Medinah, is intended. For it is noticeable that 622+403 gives 1025 years. It is in or about 1026 A. D., that another Tibetan era called the Rab-byun era begins and the Indian cycle of 60 years, based on a cycle of 12 years named after certain animals, mouse, ox, etc., and then repeated five times over in association with the names of five ‘elements’, wood, fire, etc., is introduced into Tibet, to be used henceforward, side by side with a similar 60-year Chinese cycle, for dating all important events. Whether or not this means that before 1026 the
Mekha-gya-mtsho era was in general use in Tibet\textsuperscript{43}, its existence clearly indicates, if not Islamic influence on leading circles in Tibet, at least some interest in and knowledge of the Islamic system.

In the battle of Ṭarāz (Talas) between the Arabs and the Chinese(Dhîl'-Hijjah, 133/July, 751) the Tibetans appear to have taken no part. The Arab victory under the generalship of Qutaibah b. Muslim, sometimes considered to have been one the decisive battles of history, was the last great achievement of the Umayyads\textsuperscript{44}. With the advent of the Abbâsids a new policy towards China was adopted. Arab delegations were soon received again at the Chinese court. We know this from the report of an incident which took place there at an audience in 753. On this occasion a Japanese ambassador complained that he had been assigned a lower place than the representative of Corea. At the suggestion of a Chinese general the Japanese and the Corean exchanged places, the Tibetan and Arab envoys, who were also present, remaining as before, the Tibetan on the right of the Emperor, the place of honour, the Arab, surprisingly enough after Ṭarāz, in the lowest place\textsuperscript{45}. In 757 Arab troops were sent by al-Manṣūr to assist the young Emperor Su-tsung to regain his capital of Ch'ang-an, which had fallen to rebels in the previous year\textsuperscript{46}.

Of al-Mahdī (Caliph 158/775-169/785) we read that he ‘sent envoys to the kings summoning them to obedience. Most of them entered into obedience, among them the king of Kābul-shâh called..., the king of Ṭabaristān al-Iṣbahbad, the king of as-Sughd al-Ikhshid..., the king of Siṣṭân Rutbîl, the king of the (Kharlukh) Turks Ṭarḵhān, the king of at-Tubbat Ḥhwrn, etc.\textsuperscript{47}. The last name is possibly for Khrî-srong (Ide-bsan) (Thrisong Detsen), a famous Tibetan king contemporary with al-Mahdī (reigned 755-797).

We now come to the reign of Hârûn ar-Rashid (170/786 - 193/809), by general consent one of the greatest of the Caliphs. Had he a ‘Tibetan policy’, and if so, can we say what it was? Certainly we shall not be able to do this with a great deal of precision, since the sources remain exiguous as before. Yet a pattern is distinctly traceable. Quite early in his Caliphate we hear of the virtual division of the Islamic world between the Barmecide brothers. According

\textsuperscript{43} The Chinese circle of 60 years was known earlier than 1026, Das, \textit{ibid.}, XI.


\textsuperscript{47} Al-Yaṣibî, \textit{Hst.} II, 479.
to al-Jahshiyārī, 'Ar-Rashīd appointed Jafar over the whole of the West, from al-Anbār (on the Euphrates) to I Irqiyah, in the year 176/792, and he invested al-Faḍl with the whole of the East, from Naharwān (Iraq) to the farthest of the lands of the Turks. Jafar remained at the court of ar-Rashīd. Al-Faḍl went out to his province in the year 178.48 Al-Yaqūbī's account is that ar-Rashīd 'appointed al-Faḍl b. Yaḥyā b. Khalīd b. Barmaḳ over Khurāsān. He went to Balkh, and conquered a number of districts of Ṭukhāristān, Kābul-shāh and Shiqinān.49 Elsewhere in his treatment of Balkh and its dependencies, al-Yaqūbī gives some of the successes of the governorship of al-Faḍl b. Yaḥyā50, but nothing specifically about Tibet and the Tibetans. On the other hand, Shiqinān, beyond Badakhshān, was in their general direction. Indications of the activity of al-Faḍl b. Yaḥyā on the eastern frontier of Islam are occasionally offered by other sources. Thus Ibn Khalḍūn mentions that where the Wakhshī-āb (Oxus) river, after passing through the lands of at-Tubbatā, flows between the Turks and the lands of al-Khattāl, there is a single route (masalak waḥīd) on which al-Faḍl b. Yaḥyā placed a wall (sudd) and built in it a gate, like the Wall of Gog and Magog51. Ibn Khurraḍādhīḥībī names ar-Raḥsh, 'the farthest of Khurāsān in this direction, lying between two mountains and the point of entry of the Turks for raiding' as the place where al-Faḍl built his gate52. The situation 'lying between two mountains' is a feature of the Gate of the Arabs (Dar-ī Ṭāzīyān) already mentioned, which may then have been at ar-Raḥsh, i.e. a long way north of Badakhshān. Al-Iṣrīšī also says that al-Faḍl placed a garrison at ar-Raḥsh, which has been maintained by the local rulers53.

Other defence works on the Arab side of the frontier were being created during ar-Rashīd's Caliphate. Ar-Rashīd himself restored the great wall of Sāmargand54. More especially, with reference to Badakhshān, we have a notice of al-Muqaddasī. Badakhshān 'is conterminous (munṭahām) with the lands of the Turks (al-Muqaddasī does not here speak of Tibetans) above Ṭukhāristān. In it is a mine of the jewel which resembles rubies (?) garnets, cf. above), the only mine there is. It is the Ribāṭ Faḍlī (sic), and a wonderful fortress of Zubaidah is there.55 Al-Masūdī speaks of the post of Badakhshān in the Tanbih. It is the last of the districts of Balkh in this direction. The post is a frontier in the face

49 Kūsh al-Bulād, 304.
54 Al-Yaqūbī, Bulād, 293.
55 Ed. De Goeje, 303.
of Turkish nations (aÆnâs min at-Turk) called Aukhân (cf. Wakhkhân) Tubbat and Aighân, both settled and nomad. The river (sc. the Oxus) is here known as the river of the Aighân (? Afghans)?6. This notice is repeated with slight variations in the Murùj adh-Dhahab. Here the ribât of Badakhshân is said to have over against it various kinds (anwâb) of unbelievers called Aukhân and Tubbat, while on the right (south) of these is another nation called Íghân (Abghân)?7.

There is thus distinct evidence for increased military preparedness on the eastern frontier of the Caliphate under ar-Rashid. The naming of a fortress after the reigning Empress (as-Sitt Zubaidah) in distant Badakhshân seems specially striking. To the north new dispositions may have been made, against the Khurulkhs, who under their Yabghû are sometimes mentioned in the sources of these days. The concentration, as it appears, of defence works in the neighbourhood of Badakhshân can scarcely have been intended to hold back the Khurulkhs, approaching from the north-east, and must have been designed to protect Transoxiana from the mountaineers, i.e. principally the Tibetans. Clearly the situation is not inconsistent with a diplomatic move at the Chinese court in 798 directed against the Tibetans, and such appears to have been ar-Rashid’s policy. No firm alliance can have resulted. In 801 Æbbâsid troops fought unsuccessfully against the Chinese, apparently as part of an invading Tibetan army, in western China. A Chinese record speaks of the destruction of the enemy’s camp on the Lu river, the defeat of the Tibetans in two engagements and the subsequent surrender of the Æbbâsid troops under their Tibetan commander, with the loss of 20,000 suits of armour?8.

In 190/806, still under ar-Rashid, Râfî b. al-Laith rebelled in Samarqand, and Harthamah b. Ayan was sent to deal with him. We are informed by al-Yaqûtî?9 that the forces of Râfî increased greatly, and that he had conciliated the people of ash-Shâsh and Farghânah, the people of Hujandah, Ushrusunah, as-Saghânîn, Bukhara, Khwârizm, Khuttal and other places in the districts of Balkh, Tukhâristân, as-Sughd, Må-warâ-n-nahr, the Turks, the Khurulkhs, the Tughuzghuz, the hosts (junûd) of Tibet (at-Tubbat), and others. He asked their help to fight the ruling power (as-sultân) and to kill the Muslims, and coming to the city of Samarqand, he fortified himself there.’ Whatever exactly this may mean in terms of contingents to the rebel forces, we appear to have a general reaction of the whole region against the Arab central authority, as on a previous occasion. Discontent now centres round Râfî b. al-Laith — not a native prince,

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58 S.W. Bushell, M.D., The Early History of Tibet from Chinese Sources. Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, N.S. XII. (1880), 534, n. 64, citing the Nan-chao Record.
59 Historiae, II, 528, cf. 515; Tabari, III, ii, 707.
but the grandson of a former Umayyad governor of Khurāsān. The expression 'hosts (jumūd) of Tibet' would seem to be significant for their military quality as well as mere number. There is no evidence that Tibetans were actually engaged in the present struggle, which ended with the defeat of Rāfī b. al-Laith. One notices that the Hayāṭīlah are no longer upon the scene, unless they are to be identified with the people of Khuttal.

In Ibn al-Faḍīl al-Hamādhānī we read of a king of Tibet (malik at-Tubbat) sending to al-Maʿmūn what is described as an idol (ṣānak), afterwards despatched by al-Maʿmūn to Mecca, where it became for a time one of the principal ornaments of the Kaʿbah. More information on this is given by al-Yaḥyā b. al-Kalbāj. During al-Maʿmūn’s residence in Khurāsān, i.e. before his accession to the Caliphate in 198/813, ‘the whole region was in an orderly state, and its kings all rendered obedience. The king of at-Tubbat became a Muslim and came to al-Maʿmūn at... with an idol of his, of gold, on a throne of gold encrusted with jewels. Al-Maʿmūn sent it to the Kaʿbah, in order to inform the people of God’s guidance to the king of at-Tubbat’. Al-Yaḥyā b. al-Kalbāj adds: ‘There remained no region of Khurāsān where opposition was feared. But when al-Maʿmūn left Khurāsān, Rajʿā b. abi ʿd-Daḥḥāk showed little discretion, was weak in his government and did not take hold of his affairs. Al-Maʿmūn was afraid that Khurāsān would be ruined and dismissed him, appointing Ghassān b. ʿAbbās. He did well and won over the kings of the different parts’. The ‘idol of the king of Tibet’, perhaps a statue of the Buddha, was not destined to remain long at Mecca. In 202/818, when the city was threatened by attack, with other treasures it was melted down for coin.

Before the end of al-Maʿmūn’s residence in Khurāsān, in 195/810-11, al-Amin, who was then Caliph, requested his brother to leave the East and return to Baghdad. Al-Maʿmūn, reluctant to comply, is represented by at-Ṭabarī as enumerating the difficulties with which he was faced; ‘I have learned of the disaffection in Khurāsān and the confusion of its cultivated and uncultivated parts. Jabghū (king of Ṭukharistān) has forsaken his allegiance, Khāqān lord of Tibet, is turning away. The king of Kābul prepares to raid the parts of Khurāsān

60 Cf. Delièvre, op. cit., 180.
63 Historiae, II, 550.
64 A place-name is missing in the text.
66 Text has Jiyghwyk for Jiyghū (=Yabhghū).
67 So understood by Ibn Khaldūn who has alumā alaihi (III, 494). Otherwise ‘twisting’. which is perhaps the more natural meaning of the word (iltīwa).
adjoining him. The king of Ushrubunah has refused the tribute which he used to send. I can do nothing about any of these things. Al-Faql b. Sahl hereupon advised al-Ma'mun to write to Jabghu and Khajqan, 'confirming them in the rule of their lands', and promising them support 'in the warring of the kings'. Al-Faql b. Sahl thought that he should collect all possible support and prepare to meet al-Amun in battle, pointing out what had already occurred to al-Ma'mun, that in the event of his defeat at the hands of his brother he could find a refuge with Khajqan.

The whole passage is very interesting, and is probably to be connected with the notice of the conversion to Islam of the king of Tibet. Al-Ma'mun can scarcely have contemplated entrusting his fortunes to the ruler of Tibet, unless he had some confidence that things would go well with him if he did so. It looks as if there were, if not a party, at least powerful individuals favourable to Islam in Tibet at this time. Again, the emphasis on Khajqan as the name of the ruler of Tibet, along with other indications, appears to indicate his standing among the Turkish tribes even outside of Tibet.

Al-Faql b. Sahl was subsequently appointed by al-Ma'mun in Rajab, 196/ April, 812 practically as viceroy over the East, 'from the mountain of Hamadhun to the mountain of Shiqinah (Shiqlun) and at-Tubbat, and from the sea of Fars and al-Hind (Indian Ocean) to the sea of ad-Dailam and Jurjan (Caspian). The Ribat Faql already mentioned may be his. We have hardly means of telling. The responsibility of both al-Faql b. Yahya and al-Faql b. Sahl for the eastern frontier at different times within a period of not more than twenty years seems fully authenticated, though it may be that the fame of the Barmaecide eclipsed that of the other al-Faql. It was at the time of his appointment that al-Faql b. Sahl received the title, hitherto unused in Islam, of Dhur-Riyasatn, 'the man with the double command'. Of the governorship of al-Faql b. Sahl in the eastern part of the empire we know at least he was involved with Kasr, the king of Ushrubunah (who appears to be the same as the king of Utmarbandah in a text previously mentioned). He was, however, soon removed from the scene, by assassination in the bath at Saraks in Sha-ban, 202/ February-March, 818.

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68 Tabari's text offers Utmarbandah not apparently elsewhere attested. Cf. infra.
69 Tabari, III, ii, 815; Ibn al-Ashtir, VI, 232 ('king of Tibet').
70 Tabari, ibid., 815-16; Ibn al-Ashtir, ibid.; Ibn Khaldun, III, 494-5.
71 See above.
72 Once in Tabari's narrative he is referred to as 'Khajqan, king of the Turks'.
After this, references to Tibet are now and for a long time practically absent from our historical sources. They begin again centuries later in a changed world. But such remarkable events as the Mongol invasion of the country and the Mirza Haidar's retreat from Tibet to Badakhshân76 are no part of the history of the Arabs.

To complete the enquiry something must be said about the Arabic geographical notices. These begin later and continue longer than the historical notices which we have been considering. The Kitâb Şûrat al-Ardî of Muḥammad b. Muṣâ al-Khwârizmî, written before 232/846, a work based on Ptolemy and perhaps Marinus of Tyre77, gives the co-ordinates of a city of at-Tubbat78, which are certainly derived from no ancient author. The Kitâb al-Masālik wa'l-Mamâlik of Ibn Khurrazâdîhihi, written between 230/844 and 234/848, mentions at-Tubbat repeatedly. The kings are called Khâqân, like those of the Turks and Khazars79. The qiblah of at-Tubbat as of the lands of the Turks, China, and al-Mansûrah (in Sind) is west with a difference, so that prayer is made in nearly the opposite direction by the inhabitants of these countries and the inhabitants of the Maghrib, Ibrîqiyyah, etc.80. This strictly implies Muslims in all these places. At-Tubbat is one of the boundaries of the land of the Tughuzghuz. The boundaries of China are given, on the other hand, as 'from the sea to at-Tubbat and the Turks and westward to India'81. 'He who enters at-Tubbat does not cease to laugh and be joyful without a cause, till he leaves the country'82. The outgoing of the Jaiûn, the river of Bâlkh (Oxus), is from the mountains of Tibet, and it passes by Bâlkh, Tîrmidh, etc. till it flows into the Aral sea83. These references indicate that Tibet is a familiar name to Ibn Khurrazâdîhihi. It was familiar also to Qudâmâh (d. 310/922), who seems to promise a systematic notice, where he discusses the nations surrounding the lands of Islam and the nations opposed to them84. But after beginning: 'As for at-Tubbat among the latter, it is on the right hand of the lands of the Tughuzghuz in a southerly direction', he goes on to tell a legendary tale about Alexander and 'the king of Tibet with his ārkâhâns', which serves to show, if it shows anything, the popular view of the Tibetans.

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79 Ed. De Goeje, 16.
81 Ibid., 69.
82 Ibid., 170.
83 Ibid., 173.
84 Ed. De Goeje, 363.
held in Qudāmah's time or earlier. Ibn Rustah (circa 290/903) has an uninformative little note: 'The lands of at-Tubbat and Kābul and other places in the same region consist of deserts (bawādī), level tracts (ṣāḥārā) and wastes (kharābah), which are described as long and broad in comparison with the habitable part. They have no rain in summer, but all have snow in winter owing to the cold of their climate.\(^{86}\)

A continuous account of Tibet is given by al-Yaqqūbī in his **Histories**, (later than 259/872), not in the **Kitāb al-Buldān** where it might have been expected. At-Tubbat is a broad land, greater than Chiṅa. Their kingdom is powerful (jilīlah). They are inaccessible (aṣḥāb manawāḥ) and wise, and resemble the craftsmanship (ṣanāḥ) of the Chinese. In their country are deer whose naves (surar) are musk. They are worshippers of idols and have fire-temples. Their valour is extreme (shaukatīhum shādidah), and no one fights with them.\(^{86}\)

There are several interesting references to Tibet in al-Iṣṭakhri - Ibn Ḥauqāl (see above), but nothing like a continuous account. The longest notice of Tibet in these writers is that given by Yaqqūt in his **Muṣjam al-Buldān**, a late compilation (circa 621/1224), which, however, demonstrably contains material of much earlier date. Yaqqūt's account is as follows.\(^{87}\)

'Tubbat, the first consonant with a u vowel. Az-Zamakhshari pronounces its second consonant with an i vowel, and some pronounce its second consonant with an a vowel. Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Mūsā gives its first consonant with an a vowel and its second consonant, doubled, with a u vowel, in all citations. It is a country (balad) in the land (arḍ) of the Turks. It is said to be in the fourth Climate, bordering on the lands (bilād) of the Indians. Its longitude from the west is 130° and its latitude 37°. I have read in a certain book that Tubbat is a kingdom bordering on the kingdom of China, and bordering in one direction on the land of India, in the east on the lands (bilād) of the Hayṭilāh (Hephthalites) and in the west on the lands of the Turks. They have many cities and extensive and powerful populated regions. Its people are both settled and nomad. Their desert-dwellers are Turks, who cannot be comprehended for number, and none of the desert-dwelling Turks can withstand them. They are held in honour among the Turkish races (ajnās at-Turk) because the kingship was among them in ancient times, and among their traditions is that the kingship will return to them. In the country of Tibet (balad at-Tubbat) are special properties in respect of their air and water, their mountains and plains. A man there laughs and rejoices continually. Sadness, danger, anxieties and griefs do not affect him.

\(^{85}\) Ed. De Goeje, 88.

\(^{86}\) Ed. Houtsma, I, 204.

\(^{87}\) **Muṣjam al-Buldān**, I, 817.
Their old, middle-aged and young are alike in this. The wonders of their fruits and flowers, their meadows and rivers, cannot be counted. It is a land in which the humour of the blood prevails over the rational animal and others. Among its people are sensibility of nature, liveliness and cheerfulness, which prompt to the frequent use of musical instruments and different kinds of dancing. When any has died, his family do not enter on much mourning, like what affects others, but there is mutual commiseration. Smiling among them is general. It even appears on the faces of their animals.

‘Tibet (Tubbat) is so called from the men of Himyar who were established (thubbita) and reared there. Then the th was changed to t, because th is not found in the language of non-Arabs. The story is that Tubba‘ al-Aqran marched from al-Yaman till he crossed the Jaihûn (Oxus), passed the city of Bukhara and came to Samarqand, which was waste. He built it and continued there. Then he marched towards China through the lands of the Turks for a month, till he came to broad lands, rich in water and pasturage. There he built a great city, and settled in it 30,000 of his companions who were unable to march with him to China. He named it Thubbat. Di‘bîl b. ’Alî al-Khuzâ‘i boasts of that in a qasidah in which he challenges al-Kumait:

‘It is they who wrote on the gate of Marv,
and on the gate of China they were the writers.

It is they who gave Samarqand its name in ancient times,
and they who planted there the Tibetans.’

Its people, as some assert, are after the fashion (ziy) of the Arabs, to the present time. They are skilled in horsemanship and brave, and have subdued all the different kinds of Turks who are round about them. Formerly they called everyone who reigned over them Tubba‘, in imitation of the first of them. Then time wrought its changes. Their outward appearance and language changed to those of their Turkish neighbours, and they called their kings Khâqân.

‘The country in which the Tibetan and Chinese musk-deer are is one and continuous. The superiority of the Tibetan over the Chinese is due to two things. One is that the Tibetan musk-deer pastures on spikenard (sunbul at-tîb) and certain kinds of aromatics, whereas the Chinese musk-deer pastures on grass. The other thing is that the people of Tibet do not try to remove the musk from its vesicles. The people of China do so, and it is contaminated with blood, etc. The Chinese is brought for a long distance by sea, and is reached and spoiled by the moistures. The Tibetan musk is preserved from contamination by being placed in glass bottles, the stopper of which is firmly fastened. It reaches the lands of Islam from Fârs and ‘Umân. It is excellent, really good.'
'Musk is such that its special property can alter and therefore it varies, i.e. there is no difference between our deer and musk-deer in shape and form and colour and horns. The only difference between them is in their canine teeth, which are like an elephant's tusks. Every deer has two canine teeth which protrude from their jaws, sticking out about a span, more or less. In the lands of China and Tibet snares and traps and nets are set for them, and they hunt them. Sometimes they shoot them with arrows and bring them down. Then they cut out their musk vesicles. The blood in their navels being raw, not yet having reached maturity, has an unpleasant odour which remains for a time, then ceases, like fruit which has been plucked before ripening, for it is defective in taste and smell. The best and purest musk is that which the deer casts itself, i.e. the humour drives the black blood to the navel, and when the [colour of the] blood solidifies in it and is matured, it pains the animal, and there is irritation in the navel. It runs to a sharp rock and rubs itself against it and feels pleasure therein. The blood gushes out and flows over the stones, as wounds gush out, and pustules when they come to a head. The deer feels pleasure in losing it. When the animal has emptied what was in its musk-bag, i.e. its navel (naffijah), a Persian word88, it is healed. The musk-bag ejects in addition certain components of the blood, then comes together again as it was at first. 'The men of Tibet go out and follow its pasturings among the rocks and mountains, and find the dried blood on the stones, when the maturing has been effected. They take it and place it in musk-bags which they have with them. That is the best and finest musk, and that which their own kings make use of and present to each other. Merchants rarely bring it from their lands. 'Tibet has many cities, and to each city they attribute its own musk. It is said that the Valley of Ants through which Solomon passed is behind the land of Tibet. In it is the mine of red sulphur89. They say that in Tibet is a mountain called the Mount of Poison. When anyone passes by it, he faints, and some die and some are struck dumb. 'Much of this (from 'Its people are both settled and nomad', p. 13, to 'they attribute its own musk', p. 15) is taken from the Murūj adh-Dhahab of al- Masūdī (completed in 336/947). Al-Masūdī seems to have taken part of what Yaqtūb subsequently borrowed (from 'The country in which the Tibetan and Chinese musk-deer are', p. 14), without mentioning it from a contemporary. Abū Zaid as-Sīrāfī, whose Akhbār as-Sīn wa'l-Hind is well known. The first part of the Akhbār is an anonymous account composed in 237/851, in which a certain Sulaimān the Merchant is named, sometimes considered to have been the author.

88 i.e. naffa.
89 Sometimes taken as = the philosopher's stone.
At all events, this first part appears to be based on accounts of what Sulaimān and possibly others had actually seen. Interest, however, is centred on Khān-fū (Canton), and approaches to China by sea are envisaged. Khumdān, (Ch’ang-an) is not mentioned, and the point of view of this first part is indicated by the remark, towards the end, that beyond China are the land of the Tughuzghuz and the Khāqān of Tibet. On the other hand, the second part of the Akhbār as-Ṣin wa’l-Hind is the work of Abū Zaid as-Sirāfī, writing circa 303/916, without himself having visited the Far East. It is from this second part that al-Masūdī apparently took some of his information, mentioning that he met Abū Zaid as-Sirāfī at al- Başrah in 303/916, though he does not name him as his source.

Abū Zaid as-Sirāfī, knows of a certain Ibn Wahb, a rich tribe-man of Quraish resident in al- Başrah, who after the destruction of the city during the Zaṅj rebellion, i.e. a long time previously, sailed for China, and later made his way from Khān-fū to Khumdān, where he met the Chinese Emperor and conversed with him through an interpreter, before returning to the coast. This part of Abū Zaid’s narrative was also made use of by al-Masūdī, who calls the traveller Ibn Habbūr.

From such sources as this Abū Zaid has a good deal on Tibet in his second part not mentioned in the narrative of Sulaimān the Merchant, if it be his. Thus he knows about the town of Madhū (cf. Amdo), on the frontiers of Tibet (mu’takhimah li-bilād at-Tubbat, ‘alā ḫudūd at-Tubbat), which he mentions twice. Another man of whom he had heard had travelled from Samarqand on foot and had passed from place to place in China, carrying a wine-skin (ziqg) of musk on his back, till he reached Khan-fū (Canton). The detailed account of musk and the musk-deer, which al-Masūdī took over, and which we have given above as it stands in Yāqūt, has left distinct traces also in al-Qazwīnī. It is certainly somewhat remarkable that this subject, based on what was in his time an antiquated source, should, together with the legendary connection of Tibet with the South Arabian Tubba’, form the bulk of Yāqūt’s article. Yet if by the 13th century Tibet is vaguely known as a mysterious country from which musk is obtained, and concerning which information is for the most part centuries old, the reason is clear enough. When Yāqūt wrote, Transoxiana had long passed out of Arab hands, and perhaps already when he wrote was inundated by the Mongol storm. It is the 9th century writers Ibn Khurramdābbīh and al-Yaḡūbī who, in spite of the brevity of their notices, give the impression

91 The capture of al-Baṣrah by the Zaṅj was in Shāwawl, 257/ Aug.-Sept., 871.
92 Akhbār as-Ṣin wa’l-Hind (Silsilah at-Tawārikh), ed. Reinaud, 64, 109.
93 Kosmographia, ed. Wüstenfeld, I, 386.
of really knowing something about Tibet, not Yaqūt, and this is doubtless because of their nearness to times when there was real contact between the two peoples. By the 10th century even, to judge from Abū Zaid as-Sirāfī and al-Masūdī, the earlier historical connection had to a large extent been forgotten.

In the 10th century and later, however, two accounts of Tibet were written, evidently based on more or less knowledge of the facts, how obtained we do not learn, which evidently remained unknown to Yaqūt. One of these is in the anonymous Ḥudūd al-Ālam, written perhaps by a Farīghūni of literary tastes and begun in 372/982, the other al-Idrīsī’s account dating from circa 518/1154. Both present great difficulties of interpretation. We must here dispense with anything more than a bare reference to the short notice of Lhāsa in the Ḥudūd al-Ālam, where it is said to be a small town with numerous idol temples and one Muslim mosque, in which live a few Muslims (Lhāsā shahrakīst wa-andarway but-khānahāst wa-yāk masgīt-i Musūmānān-ist wa-andarway Musūlānān-and andal). The whole section has been translated into English by Minorsky, and his commentary follows. Al-Idrīsī’s account of Tibet, like that of the Ḥudūd al-Ālam, is factual. Discussion of it should perhaps wait till the new edition of al-Idrīsī’s geographical work, at present being prepared jointly by the Istituto Universitario Orientale di Napoli and the Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, has provided us with a more reliable text. An impression of al-Idrīsī’s knowledge of Tibet can be gained from the old work of Jaubert.

None of these geographical notices claims to be a first-hand account. Exceptional in this respect is the first Risālah of Abū Dulaﬁ Misrār b. al-Muhallil, in which he reports a journey in 331/942 or 943 from Bukhara to some East Asian capital here called Sandabāl. Wherever Sandabāl was, it was evidently not in Tibet, for on the way the travellers passed through the territory of ‘a tribe known as Tubbāt. We journeyed among them for 40 days in security and abundance. They have as food wheat, barley, beans, all flesh and fish, green vegetables, grapes, and (other) fruit. They wear all kinds of clothing. They have a great town of reeds. In it is a temple made of the coloured hides of oxen, in which are coats-

96 Paris, 1836, I, 492-95 (Ninth Section of the Third Climate).
98 Yalbastīna jamīl al-libās. The meaning of this, in itself rather ambiguous, is clear from Abū D.’s previous remarks: the Chišīl wear wool and fur, the Baḥrānī only felt.
99 Or ‘red’. Arabic is madūnūnah, cf. Lane, Lexicon, s.v. dāhin.
of-mail (?) 100 and the horns of musk-deer. In it are people of the Muslims, Jews, Christians, Magians and Indians. They pay tribute (titāwah) to the Baghrājī 'Alīdī 101. None rules over them except by lot. They have a prison for crimes and faults. Their prayer is to our qiblah. 7 This appears to refer to some outlying Tibetan town, since it is practically excluded that the embassy from Bukhara (?) to Kan-chou passed through Lhasa. As Marquart observed 102, at this time the presence of Jews, Christians and Magians speaks against Tibet proper, though there is evidence for Muslims, as we have seen. Unfortunately Abū Dulaf's first Risālah, as the account of an actual journey, is so confused as to be usually judged spurious, and not much weight can be given in any case to his description of the 'city of Tubbat'. What is perhaps most remarkable here is the observation that none rules over them except by lot (lā yamlīkūhum ʿaḥad illā biʾl-qūrah), a state of things which seems remote from all or most Asiatic practice, and certainly cannot refer to the method of selection of the Dalai Lama, who appears in Tibetan history only much later (15th century A.D.).

We have canvassed most of the rather meagre sources. What conclusions can be drawn from such a survey as has been possible of Arab relations with Tibet especially in the 8th Century? There is no doubt that in Central Asia at this time, while the Arabs and the Tibetans were the new, aggressive powers, China and the Turks had diminished greatly in importance. It is probably no exaggeration to say that after the defeat at Talas (Ṭarāz) and the fall of their capital Chang-an twice within less than ten years, the Chinese permanently turned away from Central Asia and began to look to their eastern sea-board as offering the best hopes for the future. The paradox is that the powers which had, as it seems, forced the Chinese withdrawal, after confronting each other for a relatively short time themselves withdrew. The Turkish power, eclipsed for several centuries revived, and after the Mongol interlude, once more became dominant, at least in Transoxiana. This could have been foreseen by none during the period which we have been considering, though a resumption of an apparently age-old order, in which the appearance in strength in Central Asia of Arabs and Tibetans was no more than a brief episode.

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100 Text ʿal-kuthrār, which yields no plain meaning. Perhaps ʿaṣḥān with a numeral letter omitted.
101 The Turkish tribe of Baghrāj was according to Abū Dulaf ruled by chiefs descended from the ʿAlīd Yāḥyā b. Zaid, cf. Ṭabarī, II, iii, 1770ff.
102 Streifzüge, 78.