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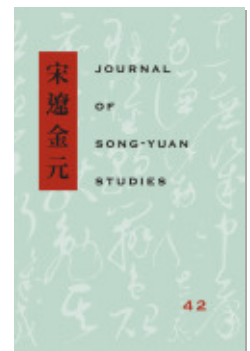
Unearthing the Liao Dynasty's Relations with the Muslim World: Migrations, Diplomacy, Commerce, and Mutual Perceptions

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UNEARTHING THE LIAO DYNASTY'S
RELATIONS WITH THE MUSLIM
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MIGRATIONS, DIPLOMACY, COMMERCE,
AND MUTUAL PERCEPTIONS

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While Liao fugitives established in Central Asia a polity—the Western Liao (西遼 Xi Liao) or Qara Khitai dynasty (1124–1218)—that ruled over a considerable Muslim population, little is known about the Kitans' earlier relations with the Islamic world. In light of the above, the present study undertakes to reconstruct various aspects of the ties between the Liao dynasty and Muslim lands. Focusing on migrations, diplomacy, and trade, it estimates the knowledge that each of these polities had of the other and the mutual impact of these presumed contacts. With this objective in mind, the paper draws on a wide array of Muslim and Chinese literary sources—chronicles along with fiction, poetry, and scientific works—as well as recent archaeological findings from both China and Central Asia. The most intriguing of these discoveries is the only extant Kitan book: a large-script Kitan text that was unearthed in Kyrgyzstan. Taken together, the ensuing analysis of these sources is certain to shed light on a highly neglected chapter in the history of the Silk Roads: the period tucked in between the halcyon days of the Tang-Abbasid exchange and the Mongol conquest.

Methodological Problems

Perhaps the primary methodological challenge of this study was how to identify both the Liao in Muslim sources and the Muslim states in Chinese sources.

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The ties between the Liao dynasty and its Muslim counterparts have proven difficult to reconstruct, and not only due to the fractured political situation and relatively sparse documentation of Inner Asia between the tenth and twelfth centuries, which are discussed below. This is mainly because the two entities existed on the fringes of each other's geographical and cultural worlds, and were part of a larger, rather nebulous rubric: the Kitans were often ambiguously referred to as belonging to the East (*mashriq*) or China (Arabic: *Shīn* or Persian: *Chīn*) in Muslim lands, and the latter were deemed as part of the Western Regions (*Xiyu* 西域) in the Sinitic world. Therefore, scholars are often hard-pressed to distinguish contacts between Liao and various Muslim entities from other east-west exchanges during this period.

The division of the Sinitic world between the Liao (907–1125), Song (960–1279), and the Xixia (982–1227) dynasties throughout most of the Liao period was paralleled by a similar lack of unity in the eastern Islamic world.¹ Although the Abbasid Caliphate (750–1258) remained the nominal ruler,² from the ninth century onwards it gradually ceded land and authority to various local powers. During the period in question, the major eastern Muslim polities were the Iranian Samanid Emirate (875–999), which ruled from Bukhara over Khurāsān and Transoxania (present-day Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and parts of Kyrgyzstan), and its two Turkic successors: the Ghaznavids (962–1187), erstwhile military slaves of the Samanids who controlled Khurāsān and Afghanistan and are famous for bringing Islam to India; and the Qarakhanids (ca. 950–1213), the first Muslim Turkic dynasty, whose territory stretched from the Tarim Basin to the Oxus. In 1040, the Qarakhanids split into the Eastern and Western Khanates; the former was centered in Kashgar and Balāsāghūn,³ while the latter established its capital in Samarqand. That same year the Seljuq Turks (ca. 1040–1158) defeated their former masters, the Ghaznavids,

1. For historical background on this period, see e.g. Peter B. Golden, "The Karakhanids and Early Islam," in *The Cambridge History of Early Inner Asia*, ed. Denis Sinor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 343–370; and Ira M. Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies*, 5th ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), esp. 137–223.

2. After 909, their nominal leadership was challenged by the Shi'ite Fatimid Caliphate (909–1171), which ruled in North Africa and (from 969) Egypt.

3. Balāsāghūn was located in the Chu Valley (modern-day Kyrgyzstan), near what is today Burana, a few kilometers south of the town of Toqmaq and about 80 kilometers from Bishkek. It later served as the capital of the Qara Khitai. See Michal Biran, *The Empire of the Qara Khitai in Eurasian History: Between China and the Islamic World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 106–107 and *passim*.

in Khurāsān and advanced westwards. By 1055, they had taken Baghdad; and within four decades, both the Western and Eastern Qarakhanids were Seljuq vassals.

The Liao texts, like other Chinese sources, refer to the Muslim Caliphate as *Dashi* (大食). This term derives from the name that the Sasanians conferred upon the Arabs and was later adopted by the Sogdians. *Dashi* originated from Ṭayy, an Arab tribe that had dwelled in Iraq during the late Sasanian era. Members of this tribe were called Ṭāzī in Arabic, which evolved into the Persian word *Tajīk* (as in modern Tajikistan) and the Chinese *Dashi*. While originally used to denote Arabs, the purview of Ṭāzī was subsequently expanded to include all Central Asian Muslims along with their various states.⁴ Even though the *Liaoshi* features several geographical names for specific countries that became Muslim, such as *Bosi* 波斯 (Persia) or *Yutian* 于闐 (Khotan)—a city-state of southern Xinjiang whose populace embraced Islam after its conquest by the Qarakhanids in 1006—Liao sources hardly differentiate between the various polities that arose in the Muslim East after the ninth century, in the wake of the Abbasids' decline. Even the Liao sources' appellation for the Qarakhanids—the nearest Muslim dynasty and its main partner in the Islamic world—remains the subject of debate. Scholars agree that, from the eleventh century on, the term *Dashi* in Song and Liao documents refers to the latter. Many Chinese scholars also identify the *Asalan Huihu* 阿薩蘭回鶻 (the Arslan [Lion] Uighurs) with the Qarakhanids and their “infidel” forefathers,⁵

4. On the etymology of Tajik/Dashi, see Richard. N. Frye, *The Heritage of Central Asia* (Princeton, NJ: Marcus Weiner Publishers, 1995), 214.

5. Wei Liangtao 魏良弢, “Kalahan wangchao yu Song, Liao ji Gaochang Huihu de guanxi” 喀喇汗王朝与宋辽及高昌回鹘的关系 (Relations among the Qarakhanids and the Song, Liao, and Gaochang Uighur Khanate), *Zhongya xuekan* 中亞學刊 1 (1983):212–223; Wei Liangtao 魏良弢, *Kalahan wangchao shi, Xi Liao shi* 喀喇汗王朝史, 西遼史 (A history of the Qarakhanids and the Western Liao) (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 2010); Wei's view, which fits nicely with the popular identification of the Qarakhanids as the predecessors of the contemporary Uighurs in Xinjiang, is espoused by many other Chinese scholars and enables them to portray cordial relations between Liao and Qarakhanids: see e.g. Ma Jianchun 马建春, *Dashi, Xiyu yu gudai Zhongguo* 大食·西域与古代中国 (The Arabs, the Western Regions, and ancient China) (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2008), 25–48, and most histories of Xinjiang. For the Qarakhanid-Uighur connection, see Wang Jianbin 王建斌, “Jin shimin Kalahan chao shi yanjiu zongshu (2000 nian–2009 nian), jianlun Kalahan chao shi yanjiu dui Weiwu'er zu yanjiu de yingxiang” 近十年喀喇汗朝史研究综述 (2000年–2009年), 兼论喀喇汗朝史研究对维吾尔族研究的影响 (An account of Qarakhanid studies in the past decade and their influence on Uighur studies), *Xibei minzu daxue xuebao* (zhixue shehui kexue bao) 北民族大学学报

but this view is rejected by others, including the present author, who argues that *Asalan Huihu* refers to a Uighur polity, in all likelihood the Gaochang 高昌.⁶

The primary reason for these disparate identifications is the dearth of records on the Qarakhanids, especially internal sources. While several contemporaneous works on Qarakhanid history are known to have existed,⁷ none of these texts have survived, and only a few of their paragraphs are cited in later sources. For this reason, scholars have no choice but to cull data from a variety of documents that focus on neighboring dynasties (above all the Ghaznavids, Seljuqs, and Abbasids as well as the Song, Liao, and Jin) or from general histories of the Muslim world (notably Ibn al-Athīr's *al-Kāmil*).⁸ In terms of material culture, the principal repository of the dynasty's history is the surfeit of unearthened Qarakhanid coins, which are augmented by several documents and monuments.⁹ Yet another obstacle is the Qarakhanid ruling

(哲学社会科学版) (2010.4): 111–116. For the different views on Qarakhanid origins, see Michal Biran, "Qarakhanid Studies: A View from the Qara Khitai Edge," *Cahiers d'Asie Centrale* 9 (2001): 77–89; and Hua Tao, "The Muslim Qarakhanids and Their Invented Ethnic Identity," in *Islamisation d'Asie centrale*, ed. Étienne de la Vaissière (Paris: Association pour l'avancement des études Iraniennes, 2008), 339–350.

6. Liu Yingsheng, "A Century of Chinese Research on Islamic Central Asian History in Retrospect," *Cahiers d'Asie centrale* 9 (2001): 121; Hua Tao 华涛, "Gaochang Huigu yu Qidan de jiaowang" 高昌回鹘与契丹的交往 (Relations between the Gaochang Uighur Khanate and the Kitan), *Xiyu yanjiu* 西域研究 (2000.1): 23–32; Unlike Wei, Liu and Hua have direct access to Muslim sources; Karl E. Wittfogel and Feng Chia-sheng, "History of Chinese Society: Liao (907–1125)," *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 36 (1946): 102, 320–324.

7. E.g., the eleventh-century *Ta'rikh Kāshgar* by al-Almaī or the twelfth-century *Akhbār Turkistān* of Majd al-Dīn 'Adnān al-Surkhakātī, the uncle of the famous author Muḥammad 'Awfi. See Michal Biran, "Ilak-khanids (or Qarakhanids)," *Encyclopedia Iranica* 12 (2005): 621–628.

8. *Al-Kāmil fī al-ta'rikh* (The complete history) of Ibn al-Athīr (1160–1233) is an annalistic history from the beginning of the world to the year 628/1230. Compiled in Mosul (Iraq), it covers the whole Muslim world, represents the high point of Muslim annalistic historiography, and has been very popular ever since its compilation. See Franz Rosenthal, "Ibn al-Athīr," *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition* (Brill Online, 2012); for a partial English translation, see Ibn al-Athīr, 'Izz al-Dīn, *The Chronicle of Ibn al-Athīr for the Crusading Period from al-Kāmil fī'l-ta'rikh*, trans. D. S. Richards (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2006–2008); and Ibn al-Athīr, 'Izz al-Dīn, *The Annals of the Saljuq Turks: Selections from al-Kāmil fī'l-ta'rikh of 'Izz al-Dīn Ibn al-Athīr*, trans. and annot. D. S. Richards (New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002).

9. For Qarakhanid numismatics, see e.g. Kochnev, *Numizmaticheskaia istoriia Karakhanid-skogo kaganata* (Moscow: Sofia, 2006). Jiang Qixiang 蔣其詳, *Xinjiang Hei Han chao qianbi* 新疆黑汗朝錢幣 (The coinage of the Xinjiang Qarakhanids) (Urumqi: Xinjiang renmin chu-

system of “musical chairs,” whereby members of the royal clan who moved up the ranks switched their titles and sometimes even their appanages. As a result, tracking the career of Qarakhanid leaders is often a daunting task. While the Samanids are better documented than the Qarakhanids, there is no full-fledged dynastic history for either regime.¹⁰

Compared to other Chinese dynasties, the Liao record is meager at best and its official history, the *Liaoshi*, leaves much to be desired. The chief culprits behind this pittance are the nomadic Kitans' irregular record keeping and the unusually long hiatus between the end of the polity (1125) and the compilation of its annals (1344–45). What is more, the *Liaoshi*'s lone chapter on foreign countries only covers the Western Xia and Korea, neither of which is of much relevance to the topic at hand. Song documents on Liao—foremost among them the *Qidan guozhi* 契丹國志 (ca. 1247) by Ye Longli 葉隆禮—are based on Song records and thus reflect a Chinese point of view.¹¹ As this volume lucidly demonstrates, the Kitan voice comes across more clearly from the archaeological record.

The Kitans are called Khatā¹² in Muslim sources, but from the twelfth century on this term usually signified the Western Liao or Qara Khitai dynasty in Central Asia; and from the thirteenth century onwards it was widely used as a synonym for China (primarily as Khitāy). Moreover, the Liao Kitans were sometimes dubbed the Turks from China or the Turks of the east (*atrāk al-mashriq*), a label that can readily be applied to other groups as well. For example, many of the Qarakhanids' leaders bore the title *Tamghaj khan*

banshe, 1990). On the newly unearthed palace in Afrasiyab (pre-Mongol Samarqand), see Yuri Karev, “Qarakhanid Wall Paintings in the Citadel of Samarqand: First Report and Preliminary Observations,” *Muqarnas* 22 (2005): 45–84.

10. For a general overview of the Qarakhanids, see Golden, “Karakhanids”; Biran “Ilakhanids,” 621–628; and Kochnev, *Numizmaticheskaia istoriia*, esp. 148–270. For the Samanids, see e.g. David Christian, *A History of Russia, Central Asia, and Mongolia* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 1:314–323.

11. Denis Twitchett and Klaus-Peter Tietze, “Bibliographical Essay: The Liao,” in *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. 6, *Alien Regimes and Border States*, 907–1368, ed. Denis Twitchett and Herbert Franke (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 665–669; Hok-Lam Chan, “Chinese Official Historiography at the Yuan Court: The Composition of the Liao, Chin, and Sung Histories,” in *China under Mongol Rule*, ed. John D. Langlois (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981), 56–106. The *Qidan guozhi* was also one of the sources of the *Liaoshi*.

12. Variants include Khatā, Khitā, Qitā/Qatā, and Khitāy/Qitāy; see the discussion in Anya King, “Early Islamic Sources on the Kitan Liao: The Role of Trade,” in this volume.

(Turkic: the Khan of China) or *malik al-mashriq wa al-Šīn* (Arabic: the king of the East and China).¹³

The above-mentioned limitations notwithstanding, the ensuing pages examine what might be gleaned from the available sources.

Migrations

Indirect and unintentional as it may be, Liao's main impact on the Muslim world was the spate of migrations that were instigated by the Kitans' rise and occupation of Mongolia, rather than its specific relations with various Muslim states. Liao expansion set in motion the westward migration of the remaining Turkic populations from Mongolia, thereby enabling the forefathers of Chinggis Khan to enter the region.¹⁴ This development brought the Turks deeper into the Islamic realm and probably contributed to the mass conversion in 960, when 100,000 or 200,000 Turkic tents allegedly embraced the Muslim faith. The rise of the Qarakhanids was a major ramification of this development.¹⁵ Another important migration, which is directly connected to the Kitans, is that of the Qun (Cumans) and the Qay (Xi 奚). Marwazī (d. after 1120), a physician from Seljuq Merv (also spelled Marw, in Turkmenistan) and the author of a voluminous book on the nature of animals, who is one of the most knowledgeable Muslim authorities on the Kitans, described this migration as triggering a domino effect: the Qun migrated out of fear of the Kitan Khan and a shortage of grazing land. After being evicted from their new pastures by the Qay, the Qun entered the land of the "Sari" (the Yellow Uighurs?), who subsequently moved to the land of the Turkmen. In turn, the latter relocated to the eastern Oghuz's lands, forcing the incumbents into the Pecheneg realm on the Pontic steppes.¹⁶

13. For Qarakhanid titles that are connected to China, see Biran, *The Empire*, 99–101; and Kochnev, *Numizmaticheskaja istoriia*, 991–1209, 87, 135–138, 145, 235, 241; see also Monika Gronke, "The Arabic Yārkand Documents," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 49, 3 (1986): 454–507; and Abū al-Qāsim Ḥasan 'Unṣurī (fl. 1009–1041), *Dīwān-i ustād 'Unṣurī Balkhī*, ed. Muḥammad Dabīr Siyāqī (Tehran: Kitābkhanah-i Sanānī, 1363/1984), 229.

14. Peter B. Golden, *An Introduction to the History of the Turkic Peoples* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1992), 184 n. 158, 164–165, 273–277.

15. 'Izz al-Dīn Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī al-ta'rīkh* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1965–67), 8:532 (200,000); Ibn Miskawaih, *Tajārib al-umam*, ed. H. F. Amedroz (Oxford: Blackwell, 1921), 2:181 (100,000); Golden, *Introduction*, 185.

16. V. Minorsky, trans., *Sharaf al-Zamān Ṭāhir Marwazī on China, the Turks, and India*

The exact dating and identity of the different ethnonyms that surface in Marwazī's account are still being debated among specialists. Peter Golden surmises that these migrations transpired during the first decades of the eleventh century, perhaps due to Liao's campaigns in western Mongolia between the late tenth and early eleventh century. At any rate, the reverberations of these hostilities were felt for several decades to come.¹⁷ For instance, a reported mass exodus to the realm of the eastern Qarakhanids in the 1040s might reflect both the Kitan threat and the western expansion of the Tanguts.¹⁸ Ibn al-Athīr makes note of a smaller wave of Turkic Islamization (ten thousand tents), whereupon "only the Kitans and the Tatars remained infidels."¹⁹ These migrations—which increased the pressure on both Ghaznavid and Qarakhanid holdings—may have been the impetus behind the Qarakhanid-Ghaznavid wars in the early eleventh century and the division of the Qarakhanids into the eastern and western khanates. They certainly enlarged the number of displaced and hungry Oghuzs, who became the tribal reservoir that the Seljuqs drew upon in order to launch their drive into the Muslim heartlands. Furthermore, the aftershocks of these movements were felt in mid-eleventh-century Byzantium and propelled the western drift of the Qipchaq-Cuman confederation—a turn of events that was destined to influence the history of the Muslim world in the centuries that followed.²⁰

(hereafter Minorsky, *Marwazī*) (London: The Royal Asiatic Society, 1942), 18 (text), 29 (trans.), 95–100, 104 (commentary).

17. Golden, *Introduction*, 184–185, 273–277; Golden "Karakhanids," 361; Cf. O. Pritsak, "Two Migratory Movements in the Eurasian Steppe in the 9th–11th Centuries," *Proceedings of the 26th Congress of Orientalists* (New Delhi, 1968), 2:158–62; reprinted in O. Pritsak, *Studies in Medieval Eurasian History* (London: Variorum, 1981), Art. VI.

18. For example the movement of allegedly seven hundred thousand horsemen, who are usually identified as members of the Mongol Naiman tribe. Their arrival in the Kashgar region is mentioned in a letter by the Nestorian metropolitan to his patriarch in 1046. Bar Hebraeus, *The Chronography of Gregory Abū'l Faraj, commonly known as Bar Hebraeus* (Piscataway, NJ: Georgia Press 2003), 205; Golden, *Introduction*, 274. They might have been connected with the "Turks from Tibet" who surrendered to the Qarakhanid ruler of Balāsāghūn in 1042/3. See Mīrḥaydar b. 'Alī, *Ta'riḫ-i Ḥaydarī (Majma' al-tawāriḫ; Zubdat al-tawāriḫ)*, extracts in *Description topographique et historique de Boukhara par Nerchakhy*, ed. Charles Schefer (Paris, 1892), 234 (hereafter Ḥaydarī/Schefer).

19. Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī al-ta'riḫ*, 9:520; 'Abd al-Raḥmān Ibn Khaldūn, *Kitāb al-'ibar* (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-Lubnānī, 1957), 4:838.

20. Golden, "Karakhanids," 361–362. The Qipchaqs became the main component of the mamluk force of the Ayyubid dynasty (1171–1260). In 1250, they rebelled against their masters and took over Egypt and Syria, where they established the Mamluk Sultanate (1250–1517).

There is also evidence of Kitan migrations into the Muslim world before the Qara Khitai's advance, although it is uncertain as to whether the Kitans in most cases cited below were ethnic Kitans or political Kitans, that is, former subjects of Liao. Ibn al-Athīr reports that when the Gürkhan, namely Yelü Dashi 耶律大石, the Qara Khitai's founder, reached Central Asia in the 1130s, ten thousand of the area's existing Kitan residents chose to join him. Before Yelü Dashi's arrival, these Kitans had been subjugated by the Western Qarakhanid ruler Arslan Khan Muḥammad son of Sulaymān (r. 1102–1130) and served in his armies. When the population of these Kitans grew, and Arslan tried to prevent their conscripted men from seeing their wives, they moved to the region of Balāsāghūn, where they fought off several attacks by the shunned khan.²¹ Writing in seventeenth-century Khwarazm, Abū Ghāzī located these Kitans in Emil, one of the earlier stations on Yelü Dashi's westward journey.²² This migration might have been tied to the Zubu 阻 卜 rebellion of 1098–1102.²³ Another possible hint of the pre-Qara Khitai western migration of the Kitans—though not to the Muslim world—is suggested by name patterns: a Cuman emissary to the great prince of Kiev in 1095 was called Kitan,²⁴ and a Qipchaq prince by the name of Kitanopa (i.e., of the Kitan tribe) was killed during a Russian campaign against the Qipchaqs in 1103.²⁵

Kitans were also brought to the Islamic lands during the Liao era as prisoners of war and slaves. For example, the major documented clash of the early eleventh century between Muslim forces and “the Turks from China,” Kitans included (see below), ended with the victorious Muslims taking vast numbers of prisoners (supposedly a hundred thousand).²⁶ Even in less volatile times, both male and female Kitans were transferred to Muslim lands as slaves, where they were renowned for their beauty.²⁷

21. Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī al-ta'rikh*, 11:84.

22. Abū al-Ghāzī Bahādur Khan, *Histoire des Mongols et des Tatares*, trans. P. I. Desmaisons (St. Leonards: Ad Orientem, 1970), 49. Emil was located near modern Tacheng 塔城, a city in northern Xinjiang, near the China-Kazakh border.

23. For the rebellion of the Zubu, the forefathers of the Tatars, see Twitchett and Tietze, “The Liao,” 138–139; and Wittfogel and Feng, “Liao,” 593–594.

24. Denis Sinor, “Western Information on the Kitans and Some Related Questions,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 115, no. 2 (1995): 266.

25. P. B. Golden, “Cumanica IV: The Tribes of the Cuman-Qipchaqs,” *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 9 (1995–97): 113; Sinor, “Western Information,” 266.

26. See n. 37 below.

27. Naṭanzī, *Ta'rikh-i Mu'īnī*, MS SPb C 381, fol. 157b; al-Ḥusaynī, *Zubdat al-tawārikh*,

The presence of early Kitan immigrants in Central Asia was among the factors that encouraged Yelü Dashi, a scion of the Kitan royal house, to move westwards and establish the Qara Khitai dynasty (1124–1218) in Central Asia after the Liao demise. The heterogeneous and multi-cultural Qara Khitai empire included a considerable Muslim population. Furthermore, it was the first time in which all of Islamic Central Asia, not least its established religious centers like Bukhara and Samarqand, came under non-Muslim rule. The wherewithal of the “infidel” Qara Khitai regime to basically maintain harmonious relations with its Muslim subjects owes a great deal to Liao's relations with the Islamic world and to the dual image of the Kitans as both nomads and “Chinese,” to be discussed below.²⁸

Diplomacy

There is very little evidence of direct diplomatic and political relations between Liao and the Muslim states. To begin with, the *Liaoshi* records the arrival of two embassies during the reign of Abaoji 阿保機, Liao's founder (r. 907–926): one from Bosi (Iran),²⁹ most likely the Samanid dynasty, in 923; and the other from Dashi, the Muslim empire (i.e., the Abbasids or once again their vassals, the Samanids) the following year.³⁰ The accounts of these delegations may have left an imprint on two somewhat fantastic stories in the Muslim literature about the celebrated Samanid ruler, Naṣr b. Aḥmad (r. 914–943). The first is the embassy of Abū Dulaf (fl. ca. 940s–980s), who, according to his own testimony, escorted the messengers of “the ruler of China Qālīn b. Shakhīr” back to their capital of Sandābīl. Moreover, he was accompanying a Samanid princess who was sent to marry Qālīn, in response to the Chinese monarch's request to cement the alliance between the two courts. Marquart, a notable early twentieth-century Turkologist, identified Sandābīl as Ganzhou 甘州, the capital of the Ganzhou Uighurs, who by then were perhaps threatened by the Liao advance. However, the description of this visit is far-fetched (Abū Dulaf goes back from Dunhuang to Bukhara

ed. M. Iqbal (Lahore: University of the Panjab, 1933), 150; Rashīd al-Dīn Faḡlallāh Hamadānī *Jāmi' al-tavārīkh. tārikh-i Sāmānīyān va Būyahīyān va Ghaznavīyān*, ed. Muḥammad Rawshan (Tehran: Markaz-i Pizhūhishī-i Mīrās-i Maktūb, 2007), 115 (hereafter Rashīd al-Dīn).

28. On Qara Khitai relations with the Muslim world, see Biran, *The Empire*, esp. 180–201.

29. Toghito (Tuotuo) 脫脫 et al., *Liaoshi* 遼史 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974), 2.19.

30. *Liaoshi*, 2.20.

via Malaysia!), and the scholarly consensus is that Abū Dulaf did not travel much outside of his Bukharan library.³¹ The other story is the alleged embassy from “the emperor of China” (*malik al-Šīn*) to Naṣr’s court. Dated to 939, the purpose of this delegation was ostensibly to demand that Naṣr pay tribute for twenty-seven years. However, its members were so deeply impressed by the skillful demonstration of wealth and military prowess displayed by Naṣr that, upon returning home and describing their adventures before the court, the “emperor of China” supposedly converted to Islam.³² This alleged conversion may echo that of the Qarakhanids. In any event, the two stories exemplify the ambiguity of the term “China” among Liao’s Muslim contemporaries and the blurred boundaries between China and the Turks (a topic discussed below). An obscure paragraph in al-Bīrūnī’s book of precious stones relays information about the Kitans from “what was written from the words of [the unidentified] *Yanāl al-Thanawī in the Samanid court.”³³ If this is not a confusion with the Kitan envoy to the Ghaznavid court mentioned below,³⁴ this clause suggests that someone familiar with the Kitans had spent time in the Samanid court.

The *Liaoshi* records an embassy from Khotan in 1015. Given that Khotan was conquered by Qarakhanids around 1006, the embassy might have been sent

31. See R. W. Bulliet, “Abū Dolaf al-Yanbui,” in *Encyclopedia Iranica*, <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/Abū-dolaf-al-yanbui-mesar-b> (accessed January 4, 2012) and the references there. Anya King suggested that Abū Dulaf mentioned the Kitans in his entry on the KhTYAN. I have never seen this form used for denoting the Kitans and in any case, the description in this passage is very general and can easily be ascribed to many northern tribes. For Abū Dulaf’s embassy, see Yāqūt, *Mu’jam al-Buldān* (Beirut: Dār Šādir, n.d.), 3:443ff.; and King, “Early Islamic Sources.”

32. Ibn Zubayr, *Kitāb al-dhakhā’ir wa’l-tuhaf*, ed. M. Ḥamīdallah (Kuwait: al-Turāth al-‘Arabī, 1959), 139–150; C. E. Bosworth, “An Alleged Embassy from the Emperor of China to the Amīr Naṣr b. Aḥmad: A Contribution to Sāmānid Military History,” in *Yād-nāme-ye irāni-ye Minorsky* [sic], ed. I. Afshar and M. Minovi (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Dānīshgāh-i Tīhrān, 1969), 1–7; Biran, *The Empire*, 196–197, and see there for the translation of *Malik al-Šīn* as emperor in this text.

33. Abū Rayḥān Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Bīrūnī, *Kitāb al-jamāhīr fī ma’rifat al-jawāhīr*, ed. Yūsuf al-Hādī (Tehran: Sharikat al-nashr al-‘ilmī wa-l-thakāfī, 1995), 112 (hereafter Al-Bīrūnī, *Jawāhīr*). On p. 370 Yanāl/Wīnāl al-Šābī is mentioned as an informant about Chinese porcelain.

34. The editor of *Kitāb al-jamāhīr* cites Zaki Velidi Togan, who believes that Yanāl was the Kitan emissary to Ghazna discussed below, who was indeed al-Bīrūnī’s informant. In Minorsky, *Marvazī*, 8 (text), 22 (trans.), however, the emissary is called Qalitunkā (Qul Tonga?), but presumably there were other delegates on the mission. Al-Bīrūnī, *Jawāhīr*, 112 n. 3; see also Abū Rayḥān Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Bīrūnī, *Bīrūnī’s Picture of the World*, ed. A. Zeki Validi Togan (Delhi: Latifī, 1937), 118 (hereafter Togan, *Bīrūnī’s Picture*).

by the latter for the purpose of opening relations with Liao in the aftermath of their victory. However, two previous embassies from Khotan are dated to 989 and 998, during the Qarakhanid-Khotan war, so they may reflect Khotan's attempts to ask for Liao help.³⁵ Accordingly, the embassy of 1015 might have been a last-ditch effort on the part of the Khotanese to oppose the Muslim conquest. Since no further Khotanese embassies to Liao are recorded (as opposed to a steady flow of embassies from Qarakhanid Khotan to the Song realm and Khotan participation in the Tangut trade), the *Liaoshi's* account of this delegation is hard to pin down.³⁶

The first direct contact between Liao and the Qarakhanid might have been far less diplomatic: in 1017–18 “the Turks from China,” estimated to number one hundred thousand men or over three hundred thousand men, most of them Kitans, were reportedly encouraged to embark on a campaign to the west by the news that the Qarakhanid state was in decline due to the poor health of its ruler, Tughan Khan (r. 998–1018). The invaders advanced until they were only an eight-day march from the Qarakhanid capital. At this point, though, they heard that Tughan Khan had convalesced and was recruiting troops from the lands of Islam. In consequence, the majority of the “Turks” returned to the east. However, their rear guard, which stayed in Balāsāghūn for three months, was defeated by Tughan Khan, who killed and captured many of the troops. In the process, some distinctive Chinese goods fell into his hands.³⁷ This incursion might have been connected to the Zubu tribe's rebellion in 1012–13,³⁸ or perhaps it was an offshoot of the above-noted Qun

35. *Liaoshi*, 12.133, 134, 136; 13.139; 70.1140, 1141; on the Qarakhanid conquest of Khotan, see Biran, “Ilak-khanids,” and the references therein.

36. For Khotan embassies to the Song, see Robert M. Hartwell, *Tribute Missions to China, 960–1126* (Philadelphia: privately published, 1983), 56–69; electronic version at <http://www.ari.nus.edu.sg/docs/Hartwell.pdf> (accessed December 1, 2012); on the role of Khotan in the Tangut trade, see e.g. Tuotuo 脱脱, *Songshi* 宋史 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1977), 490.14123–24, 492.14165.

37. Al-'Utbi, *al-Yamīnī* (Beirut: Dār al-Talī'ā, 2004), 385–387 (n.d.); Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī al-ta'rīkh*, 9:297; Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. 'Uthmān al-Dhahabī, *Siyar a'lām al-nubalā'*, ed Sh. al-Arnā'ūt and H. al-Asad (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risāla, 1982–88), 17:278–279 (dated to 1017–18); Bar Hebraeus, *The Chronography*, 186 (1014); Ḥaydarī/Schefer, 233 (1012/13); Muḥammad b. Khandshāh Mīrkhwānd, *Ta'rīkh-i rawḍat al-ṣafā* (Tehran: Payrūz, 1960), 3:523 (during the reign of the Abbasid al-Qādir, r. 991–1031); Rashīd al-Dīn 60–61, n.d.; Ibn Khaldūn, *Kitāb al-'ibar*, 4:386–387, n.d. The date of 1017–18 is confirmed by numismatic evidence. Boris D. Kochnev, “La chronologie et la généalogie des Karakhanides du point de vue de la numismatique,” *Cahiers d'Asie centrale* 9 (2001): 52.

38. Wei Liangtao, “Kalahan wangchao,” 219, 221; Wei's reconstruction, however, is based on

and Qay migrations.³⁹ Other hazy accounts of smaller clashes with eastern invaders, along with the migrations we have already touched on, suggest that these sorts of incidents were not rare.⁴⁰ Once again, it is hard to determine whether the Kitans therein were ethnic Kitans, political Kitans (i.e., subjects or former subjects of Liao), or merely another kind of “Turk from China” that the mostly later (post-Qara Khitai) sources grouped together with the Kitans.

Tughan Khan was succeeded by his brother Maṣṣūr b. ‘Alī Arslan Khan (r. 1013/4–1024/5), who ruled in Balāsāghūn even before his brother’s death. Another sibling, Qadr Khan, the conqueror of Khotan (1006), continued to reign over the eastern territories and was probably responsible for the improved relations with Liao: in 1020–21, the *Liaoshi* records two embassies from Dashi. The delegation of November 1020 brought an elephant (or ivory?) and local products. Moreover, it sought to arrange a marriage between the Liao royalty and their leader’s son Cege 冊割.⁴¹ The following year, the Dashi king again sent emissaries to ask for a princess. Kelao 可老, the daughter of a court noble, was given the title of princess and sent to the sovereign.⁴² In this case, it is quite evident that the Dashi are the Qarakhanids; for in Emperor Shengzong’s letter to Maḥmūd of Ghazna, he mentions his alliance with Qadr Khan “through a noble lady from the bosom of my house who became married to his son Chaghri Tegin.”⁴³

This letter indeed constitutes part of the best documented interaction between Liao and the Muslim world, which, however, has left no trace in the *Liaoshi*.⁴⁴ In 417/1026 or 418/1027 an embassy from “the kings of Cathay and

a clash between the Liao forces that were sent to quell this rebellion and the Arslan Uighurs, which he identified with the Qarakhanids. On the Zubu rebellion, see *Liaoshi*, 15.169, 171, 173, 174, 176, 178, 180; 94.1381; Wittfogel and Feng, “Liao,” 587.

39. Golden, “Qarakhanids,” 561–562.

40. See e.g. Muḥammad ‘Awfī, *Jawāmi’ al-ḥikāyāt*, fol. 231a–232a, reproduced in V. V. Barthold, *Turkestan v epokhu mongol’skogo nashestiia* (St. Petersburg: Tipografiia imperatorskoi akademii nauk, 1900), 1 (texts): 94–7. This text describes a non-dated attack of the Khan of Chīn, son of SWYGY, on Tamghaj Khan of Kashgar, despite their former alliance. The Khan of Chīn was encouraged to raid Kashgar when he heard about Tamghaj Khan’s lack of alertness. Again, the Qarakhanid ruler managed to check this threat, using local forces, and took many captives; see also Haydarī/Schefer, 234–235.

41. *Liaoshi*, 16.188.

42. *Liaoshi*, 16.189. Nothing more is known about this princess or her father in the *Liaoshi*.

43. Minorsky, *Marvazī*, 8 (text); 20 (trans.).

44. I suspect that this is due to the fact that the letter was written in Turkish, and thus inacces-

Uighur" (*mulūk Qitāy wa-Yughur*) arrived at the court of Maḥmūd of Ghazna (r. 998–1030) in Afghanistan.⁴⁵ The Ghaznavid sources explain that the delegation was sent because of the foreign rulers' trepidation of Maḥmūd. The latter had just concluded a series of victories in India, which greatly enlarged his territory and wealth, and, if we are to believe the letters that Marwazī translated, at least the Uighur ruler was quite aware of these developments. Qadr Khan's newly amicable relations with Maḥmūd, also cemented by marriage after several years of enmity, might have smoothed the connection. Another reason for this détente was the growing power of Liao's neighbor, the Tangut Western Xia dynasty (982–1227). In the 1020s, the Tangut leader, Li Deming 李德明 (r. 1004–1032), made inroads into the west, threatening the Ganzhou Uighurs, whom he eventually conquered in 1028.⁴⁶ The Uighurs might have been interested in recruiting allies against this juggernaut. The Liao letter called for the regular exchange of envoys and "mutual donations," along the lines of their existing relations with many other rulers "who cannot help but seek our friendship." Maḥmūd treated the embassy honorably but declined its request for closer relations, because the Kitan rulers were not Muslims and due to the great distance between their respective lands.⁴⁷ As discussed below, this unique embassy constitutes a primary Muslim source on the Kitans.

With the exception of Marwazī's general statement whereby the Kitans and the Uighurs maintain relations and a correspondence with the kings of Transoxania (the western Qarakhanids), no other direct political connections between Liao and the Muslim polities are recorded after this date.⁴⁸ However,

sible to the Chinese scholars who compiled the Liao's veritable records. Another possibility is the messy state of the *Liaoshi*.

45. Minorsky, *Marwazī*, 7–9 (text), 19–21 (trans); Gardīzī, *Zayn al-Akhbar*, ed. 'Abd al-Ḥayy Ḥabībī (Tehran: Intishārāt-i bunyād-i farhang-i Iran, 1347/1969), 191.

46. Ruth Dunnell, "The Hsi Hsia," in *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. 6, *Alien Regimes and Border States*, 907–1368, ed. Denis Twitchett and Herbert Franke (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 172–179.

47. Minorsky, *Marwazī*, 8 (text) 20 (trans.).

48. *Ibid.*, 3 (text), 15 (trans.). This statement, however, can refer to the embassy's letter that he cites, and not necessarily to a later period. Qian Boquan argued that Yelü Dashi's first name, Dashi (大石), which is sometimes used as a variant of Dashi (Qarakhanids), suggests a special connection between him and the Qarakhanids. He may even be a descendant of a Qarakhanid princess that was married to the Liao royal house, a fact that may have prompted his decision to move westwards. Qian Boquan 錢伯泉, "Dashi, Heiyi Dashi, Halahan wangchao kaoshi" 大石, 黑衣大石, 哈刺汗王朝考試 (An investigation of the Dashing, the black-clothed Dashing,

there are indications of long-term commercial relations and of continuing infiltration of Kitan's subjects into the Muslim world.⁴⁹

Commerce

There is both literary and archeological evidence of trade between Liao and the Muslim world, but here too the details are not easy to assemble and interpret. Most of the Islamic findings in Liao tombs and pagodas are dated to the eleventh century (1018–1058), after the signing of the Chanyuan treaty between Liao and Song in 1005. According to this pact, Liao received a considerable amount of silk and silver from Song on an annual basis, thereby swelling Liao's trade volume and income. By dint of these revenues Liao was able to export many Chinese goods, which were produced either locally or in Song, and to import luxury goods.⁵⁰ These developments coincided with the burgeoning of the Qarakhanid dynasty, which was apparently Liao's principal Muslim trading partner. The issue of exchanged goods is sagaciously discussed by both Valerie Hansen and Anya King in this volume, so that we can suffice with a brief summary:

The most typical finding of Islamic provenance in Liao are glass vessels. Of the forty Muslim glass vessels that have been unearthed in China, at least eleven opulent items were found at Liao sites in both Inner Mongolia and Liaoning—seven of them in the tomb of Princess Chen, which is dated

and the Qarakhanid dynasty), *Minzu yanjiu* 民族研究 (1995.1): 75–82; Qian Boquan 錢伯泉, “Dashi yu Liao chao de jiaowang he Yelü Dashi de xi zheng” 大食與遼朝的交往和耶律大石的西征 (Communication between Dashi and Liao, and Yelü Dashi's western expedition) *Zhongguo gudai shi (er)* 中國古代史 (二) (1995.6): 24–31; Qian Boquan 錢伯泉, “Dashi guo shi yanjiu: Kalahan wangchao qianqi shi tan wei” 大石国史研究: 喀喇汗王朝前期史探微 (Research on the history of the Dashi kingdom: An exploration of the early period of the Qarakhanid dynasty), *Xiyu yanjiu* 西域研究 (2004.4): 37–46. All this, however, is not supported by any source I am familiar with. For the different names of Yelü Dashi in Muslim sources, none of which resembles Dashi, see Biran, *The Empire*, 19, and see therein for Pelliot's rendering of “Dashi” as a title (*taishi*).

49. The “close and amicable” relations between Liao and the Qarakhanids, which are celebrated in Chinese publications (e.g., Ma Jianchun, 25–48); Wei Liangtao, “Kalahan wangchao,” often refers to the embassies of the Arslan Uighurs, who indeed sent sixteen embassies to Liao, the last in 1068. See n. 5 above.

50. For the Chanyuan treaty and its implications, see e.g., Twitchett and Tietze, “The Liao,” 108–110; and David C. Wright, *From War to Diplomatic Parity in Eleventh-Century China: Sung's Foreign Relations with Kitan Liao* (Leiden: Brill, 2005).

to 1018. A chemical analysis of these artifacts reveals that most of them were crafted in Nishapur, Eastern Iran, while some originated in Egypt or Syria. A pair of similar Nishapuri glass vessels was uncovered at Song sites from the first half of the eleventh century.⁵¹ Another distinctively Muslim product is metal bowls with Arabic inscriptions.⁵² It is also worth noting that a substantial number of early Liao gold and silver vessels and jewelry are adorned with western motifs (Byzantine, Sasanian, and Sogdian). Likewise, many other findings, most notably Baltic amber, were produced further west and might have been brought eastwards, either directly or otherwise,

51. For Muslim glass in Liao tombs, see An Jiayao, "Dated Islamic Glass in China," *Bulletin of the Asia Institute* 5 (1991): 123–137; Ma Wenkuan 马文宽, "Liao mu Liao ta chutu de Yiselan boli: Jiangtan Liao yu Yiselan shijie de guanxi" 辽墓辽塔出土的伊斯兰玻璃——兼谈辽与伊斯兰世界的关系 (Islamic glass found in Liao tombs and Liao pagodas: A discussion of relations between Liao and the Islamic world), *Kaogu* 考古 (1994.8): 736–743 (and see there also for Song Islamic vessels); Fu Ning 傅宁, "Nei Menggu diqi faxian de Liaodai Yisilan boli qi—Jiantan Liao shiqi dui wai maoyi he wenhua jiaoliu" 内蒙古地区发现的辽代伊斯兰玻璃器: 兼谈辽时期的对外贸易和文化交流 (Liao-dynasty Islamic glass vessels found in Inner Mongolia and a discussion of foreign trade and cultural relations during the Liao), *Nei Menggu wenwu kaogu* 内蒙古文物考古 (2006.2): 78–88; and Sun Hong 孙泓, "Xifang wenhua zai Liaodai de chuanbo" 西方文化在辽代的传播 (The spread of Western culture during the Liao), *Liaojin lishi yu kaogu* 辽金历史与考古, 1 (2009): 78–86. See also Qi Dongfang, "Islamic Glass and the Silk Road," in *Collection of Papers on Iranian Studies in China*, ed. Ye Yiliang (Beijing: Peking University Press, 2009), 119–122; Yang Fuxue 杨富学 and Chen Aifeng 陈爱峰, "Liaochao yu Dashi diguo guanxi kaolun" 遼朝與大食帝國關係考論 (A study and discussion of relations between Liao and the Arab empires), *Hebei daxue xuebao* 河北大学学报 32, no. 5 (2007): 36–39; Jiang Xin 姜歆, Ma Lijuan 马丽娟, and Yang Yongfang 杨永芳, "Islan jiao zai Liao chao de chuanbo yu fazhan tansuo" 伊斯兰教在辽朝的传播与发展探索 (A preliminary exploration of the spread and development of Islam during the Liao dynasty), *Chifeng Xueyuan xuebao* (Hanwen zhixue shehuike xuebao) 学报赤峰学院学报 (汉文哲学社会科学版), 26, 2 (2005): 2. For examples of Islamic vessels from Liao tombs, see e.g. Shen Hsueh-man, ed., *Gilded Splendor: Treasures of China's Liao Empire (907–1125)* (New York: Asia Society, 2006), 330–334. The biggest concentration of Nishapur glass outside Iran is found in China (in Tang tombs). See Jens Kroeger, *Nishapur: Glass of the Early Islamic Period* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1995), 8, 33–37. For Islamic glass in the Tang, see Edward H. Schafer, *The Golden Peaches of Samarkand: A Study of Tang Exotics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963), 235–237.

52. Sun Hong, "Xifang wenhua," 70–77; Zhang Jingming 张景明, "Liaodai jinyin qi zhong de Xifang wenhua he Song wenhua de yinsu" 辽代金银器中之西方文化和宋文化的因素 (Elements of Song and Western culture in the gold and silver vessels of the Liao), *Nei Menggu daxue yishu xueyuan xuebao* 内蒙古大学艺术学院学报 3, no. 1 (2006): 41–46; Shen, *Gilded Splendor*, 360. For brass and metal vessels exported from Persia in Tang times, see Schafer, *Golden Peaches*, 256–257.

by Muslim merchants.⁵³ The murals displaying hunting leopards that were trained to ride on horses, which Song emissaries reported seeing in the Liao court around 1020, also fall under the heading of Western items. For strictly zoological reasons, these cheetahs must have been imported from Africa, Iran, Transoxania, or India. Therefore, it stands to reason that they passed through multiple Muslim (and other) hands before reaching the Liao court.⁵⁴

On the other hand, Liao-style ceramics have surfaced in Iran, especially Nishapur, and in the Persian Gulf port of Siraf. They have also been found in Samarra in Iraq and in Fuṣṭāṭ (near Cairo), the capital of Fatimid Egypt (969–1171), along with a larger amount of Song porcelain.⁵⁵

Compared to the archeological record, the literary sources reveal a much broader range of goods, many of which are perishable. An oft-cited paragraph in the *Qidan guozhi*, “Items Presented by Various Small Countries,”⁵⁶ asserts that the countries and peoples of the West—Turfan, Kucha, Khotan, Dashi (i.e., the Qarakhanids), Xiaoshi 小食 (i.e., Hami),⁵⁷ the Ganzhou 甘州 Uighurs, the Dunhuang Uighurs, and Liangzhou 凉州 (in Gansu)—brought jade, pearls, horns (*xi* 犀), frankincense, amber, agate vessels, wrought-iron weapons, treated hides, three types of silk, glass (*pali* 怕里), and ammonium

53. On amber in Liao, see Xu Xiaodong 许晓东, “Qidan hupo yishu yanjiu” 契丹琥珀艺术研究 (Studies in the art of Liao amber) (Ph.D. diss., The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2005). For examples of Liao amber, see e.g. Shen, *Gilded Splendor*, 110–111, 152–153, 168–175, 182–183, 186–187, 284–285. On other Western commodities, see Sun Hong, “Xifang wenhua,” 67–90; and Valerie Hansen, “International Gifting and the Kitan World, 907–1125,” in this volume.

54. David C. Wright, *The Ambassadors’ Records: Eleventh-Century Reports of Sung Embassies to the Liao* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University, Research Institute for Inner Asian Studies, 1998), 62. On the murals, see e.g., Sun Hong, “Xifang wenhua,” 88–90; Jiang, Ma, and Yang, “Isilan jiao,” 2–3. On hunting cheetahs, see Thomas T. Allsen, *The Royal Hunt in Eurasian History* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 74–82.

55. Basil Gray, “The Export of Chinese Porcelain to the Islamic World: Some Reflections on Its Significance for Islamic Art, Before 1400,” *Transactions of the Oriental Ceramic Society* 1975/76–1976/77 (1977): 232–234; Yolande Crowe, “Early Islamic Pottery and China,” *Transactions of the Oriental Ceramic Society* 1975/76–1976/77 (1977): 263–278; Paul Kahle, “Chinese Porcelain in the Lands of Islam,” *Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society* 1 (1953): 218–233, reprinted in Paul Kahle, *Opera Minora* (Leiden: Brill, 1956); Yang and Chen, “Liaochao yu Dashi diguo,” 37; and Kroeger, *Nishapur Glass*, 34.

56. Ye Longli 葉隆禮, *Qidan guozhi* 契丹國志 (Siku quanshu edition), 21.7a.

57. Hu Xiaopeng 胡小鵬, “Qidan guozhi’ zhong de Xiao Shi guo kao” 《契丹國志》中的“小食国”考 (Textual research on the Xiaoshi state in *The History of the Kitan State*), *Xiyu yanjiu* 西域研究 (2006.3): 11–15.

chloride (used as a metallurgical flux and for treating hides) to Liao. Most of the non-perishable items on this list were indeed found in Liao tombs.⁵⁸

One can get a taste for the Qarakhanid's exports to Liao from the relatively detailed reports on eleventh-century Khotanese embassies to Song, which were probably sent with the approval of the Qarakhanid rulers. Among the items that these delegations transported were jade, pearls, coral, uncut gems, elephant tusks, kingfisher feathers, glass, frankincense, dragon salt (*long yan* 龍鹽⁵⁹), Central Asian (*hu* 胡) brocade, and flowered cotton, as well as camels, horses, donkeys, and a lion, which was turned down.⁶⁰ While the list includes some items of local provenance, notably jade and animals, it is dominated by imported goods, especially coral and elephant tusks. The Dashi embassy of 1020 brought elephant (or ivory) to the Liao court.⁶¹ Al-Bīrūnī mentions amber, jade, and *khutū* (rhinoceros horns or walrus tusks) as items favored by the Kitans.⁶² This fits nicely with Marwazī's list of exported goods, albeit to China: ivory, frankincense, genuine Slavonic amber used for ornaments, and *khutū*, the most expensive item. This inventory is also commensurate with the findings at Liao tombs.⁶³

Khutū can refer to both walrus tusks and rhinoceros horns and is perhaps the only Arabic word that might have been borrowed from the Kitan. This term certainly became more prominent in Muslim sources between the tenth and

58. Hansen, "International Gifting"; see also Sun Hong, "Xifang wenhua," esp. 86–87, where the jade is defined as made in China (which probably includes Xinjiang, i.e., the source of Qarakhanid jade). For a list of agate vessels found in Liao tombs, see Yang and Chen, "Liaochao yu Dashi diguo," 37.

59. Dragon salt was a medicine, popular as an aphrodisiac; see <http://www.zdic.net/cd/ci/5/ZdicE9ZdicBEZdic9984997.htm> (accessed September 17, 2012).

60. Hans Bielenstein, *Diplomacy and Trade in the Chinese World, 589–1276* (Boston: Brill, 2005), 308–312; most of the luxurious items are mentioned in the entry on Khotan in Ma Duanlin 馬端臨, *Wenxian tongkao* 文獻通考 (Siku quanshu edition), 337.47a (electronic edition p. 2959); for fuller details, see Hartwell, *Tribute Missions*, 56–69.

61. *Liaoshi*, 16.188.

62. Al-Bīrūnī, *Jawāhir*, 317 (jade for Qitay), 343 (amber for *atrāk al-mashrik*, the "Turks from the East" as he called the Kitans). Like Marwazī, he states that they do not appreciate Chinese amber and prefer the Byzantine variety (*rūmī*) because of its purity and lighter color. Al-Bīrūnī also notes that it was used against the evil eye. He discusses glass, agate, rock crystal, gold, and silver, but he does not refer to their export.

63. Minorsky, *Marwazī*, 15 (text), 23 (trans.). That said, it is impossible to determine whether this information was contemporaneous to Marwazī's time or based on records describing Muslim trade with Tang China.

twelfth centuries, what with its popularity in Liao and China. Al-Bīrūnī notes that there was a high demand for *khutū* among Kitans because it allowed for the detection of poison in food. Given that *khutū* is described as an export to the Muslim world, mainly from the Qirghiz but also from Tibet and China (Khitāy?), it may have also been distributed from Liao.⁶⁴

In all that concerns Liao exports, the list of gifts that are enumerated in Marwazī's report on the Kitan embassy constitutes a fine starting point. The author mentions an array of suits: fifteen of raw silk, one of Chinese multi-colored brocade (*kānzi*), and five of three other unidentified textiles. Among the other items are 200 sable martens, 1,000 grey squirrels, and an undisclosed number of sable marten furs for raincoats (*yāqū*); 30 musk pods; and a single bow with 10 arrows.⁶⁵ This inventory overlaps Qarakhanid presents to the Ghaznavids, which usually included *zarāyif-i šīnī* (Chinese choice goods).⁶⁶ This, then, may partly account for Maḥmūd's lack of enthusiasm for the delegation.

As Anya King demonstrates, musk was the item most identified with the Kitans in Muslim literature. Kitan musk (*al-misk al-khiṭā'ī*) informs the Muslim literature on perfumes as early as the late tenth century and became more popular in the ensuing century.⁶⁷ By the 1100s, it was indeed a common metaphor in Seljuq poetry.⁶⁸ In fact, the Tatar musk that comes up in several poems by Minūchihri, Maḥmūd of Ghazna's court poet, might have also

64. For more on *khutū*, see Berthold Laufer, "Arabic and Chinese Trade in Walrus and Narwhal Ivory," *T'oung Pao* 14 (1913): 315–370; Laufer, "Supplementary Notes on Walrus and Narwhal Ivory," *T'oung Pao* 17 (1916): 348–389; King, "Early Islamic Sources"; and Hansen, "International Gifting." The word appears as *guduoxi* 骨突犀 in *Liaoshi*, 96.1402 and 116.1549, and as *gutuxi* 骨突犀 in *Liaoshi*, 21.252. On the presence of *khutū* in Tang China, see Schafer, *Golden Peaches*, 241–242. The Qara Khitai seem to have shared this craving for *khutū*. In the 1150s, one Mu'ayyid, a former Seljuq commander who ruled in Nishapur, sent the Gürkhan an extremely large pearl, precious stones, and *khutū* as a gift. 'Abd al-Qāsim 'Abdallāh Kāshānī, *'Arāyis al-jawāhīr wa-nafāyis al-aṭāyib*, ed. I. Afshār (Tehran: Anjāman-i āthār-i malī, 1345/1966), 126.

65. Minorsky, *Marvazī*, 8 (text) 20 (trans); the unidentified textiles are KhWYDh ZhUNKY; SHKRDY. See also King, "Early Islamic Sources."

66. Rashīd al-Dīn, 115; Gardīzī, *Zayn al-Akhhbār*, 189; 'Utbi, *al-Yamīnī*, 257.

67. Anya H. King, "Some 10th Century Material on Asian Toponymy from Saḥlān b. Kaysān," *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 16 (2008–9): 121–126; and King, "Early Islamic Sources."

68. Muḥammad 'Awfi, *Lubāb al-albāb*, ed. Sa'īd Nafīsī (Tehran: Kitābkhānah-i Ibn Sīnā, 1335/1957), 448, 494, 542, 558.

derived from the Liao regions.⁶⁹ Other goods that the sources considered to be Kitan exports are silk and textiles,⁷⁰ pearls,⁷¹ gold and silver vessels,⁷² slaves,⁷³ and “Chinese goods,”⁷⁴ although it is hard to determine whether they were local goods imported from Liao or elsewhere (e.g., from Song via Khotan). These items, especially the Chinese goods, often comprised Qarakhanid gifts to the Ghaznavids.⁷⁵ In general, the Kitans did not have a monopoly on any product, and most of the items ascribed to them fall under the category of either Chinese goods or Turkic products. The only exception is the gold and silver vessels. Since these objects were also part of the loot taken from the troops that were defeated by Tughan Khan, in all likelihood portable objects such as belt plaques or saddle ornaments also fell under this heading. Indeed, one of the very few patently Liao articles to turn up in Central Asia is a gilded silver saddle ornament, now in fragments, which features a Liao dragon motif. This unique item, discovered by Yuri Karev in 2001 in a twelfth-century site at Afrāsiyāb (pre-modern Samarqand), is apparently a product of the Qara Khitai era.⁷⁶

It is evident from this list of items that Liao relations with Muslim polities were part and parcel of a complex series of contacts along the Silk Roads stretching well beyond the Muslim world and in which the Song dynasty played a leading role.⁷⁷ Uighurs, who had their own quarter in Liao Supreme

69. Minūchihīrī Dāmghānī, Aḥmad b. Qawṣ. *Dīwān-i Minūchihīrī Dāmghānī*, ed. S. M. Dabīrsiyāqī (Tehran: Gulshan, 1384/2006), 44, 115.

70. Ḥasan b. 'Alī Nizām al-Mulk, *Siyar al-Mulūk (Siyāsat nāmah)*, ed. H. Darke (Tehran: Majmū'ah-i mutūn-i Fārsī, 1962), 192–193; Nizām al-Mulk, *The Book of Government, or Rules for Kings*, trans. H. Darke (London: Routledge & Paul, 1960), 155–156; Bar Hebraeus, *The Chronography*, 186.

71. Al-Bīrūnī, *Jawāhir*, 212.

72. Bar Hebraeus, *The Chronography*, 186; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī al-ta'rīkh*, 9:297.

73. Naṭanzī, *Ta'rīkh-i Mu'imī*, fol. 157b; al-Ḥusaynī, *Zubdat al-tawārīkh*, 150; Rashīd al-Dīn, 115.

74. Yusuf Khass Hajīb [sic], *Wisdom of Royal Glory (Kutadgu Bilig)*, ed. and trans. R. Dankoff (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 41; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī al-ta'rīkh*, 9:297.

75. Rashīd al-Dīn, 115; *Utbī, al-Yamīnī*, 257; Gardīzī, *Zayn al-Akhhār*, 189.

76. The item, which has yet to be published, is mentioned in Franz Grenet, “Maracanda/Samarkand, une métropole pré-mongole: Sources écrites et archéologie,” *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 59, 5–6 (September–December 2004): 1064. I would like to thank Yuri Karev for telling me about it, and Franz Grenet for providing me with a picture of it.

77. Hansen, “International Gifting.”

Capital, who traveled between Song and Liao and whom the Muslim also sometimes identified as Chinese, must have been important middlemen on the continental Silk Road.⁷⁸ For this reason, it is impossible to determine whether Chinese goods in the Qarakhanid realms or Islamic artifacts in Liao tombs reached their destination in a direct or indirect fashion. The locations in which Liao porcelain have surfaced and the presence of Egyptian glass in Liao tombs point to the use of maritime routes (via Song) in unison with the continental road. Moreover, the multiple embassies that were exchanged between Khotan and Song demonstrate that Muslim goods could even reach Liao from Song. Though many more must have existed, there is at least one clear indication of such indirect connections in the sources: in 1006 the ambassador of the Shazhou 沙州 king of Dunhuang delivered horses from the Dashi state/s (Dashiguo 大食國) and beautiful jade to Liao.⁷⁹

It also bears noting that China was a brand name in the Muslim world. Al-Tha'ālibī (d. 1038), a prolific connoisseur of Arabic literature and compiler of various anthologies born in Nishapur, states that “[t]he Arabs used to call every delicately or curiously made vessel and such like, whatever its real origin, Chinese, because finely-made things are a specialty of China.”⁸⁰ Both al-Tha'ālibī and Marwazī relate that in comparison to Chinese artisans, all others are considered blind, except for the Byzantines or Babylonians, who have one eye.⁸¹ Moreover, imitations of Chinese goods, some better than others, were not uncommon during the period in question: al-Bīrūnī mentions bad imitations of Chinese porcelain in Iran, and some examples of such vessels indeed surfaced in Egypt, Iran, and Transoxania.⁸² Slightly later, al-Tifāshī (d. 1253), author of another book on precious stones, describes rather successful jade imitations in Egypt.⁸³ Given the allure of the Chinese “brand name,” it

78. See for example the two above-mentioned Samanid stories; Yang and Chen, “Liaochao yu Dashi diguo,” 39.

79. *Liaoshi*, 14.162, 70.1155; Yang and Chen, “Liaochao yu Dashi diguo,” 37.

80. ‘Abd al-Malik b. Muḥammad Tha’ālibī, *Kitāb Laṭā’if al-ma’ārif* (Lugduni Batavorum, 1868), 127; ‘Abd al-Malik b. Muḥammad Tha’ālibī, *The Laṭā’if al-ma’ārif of Tha’ālibī: The Book of Curious and Entertaining Information*, trans. C. E. Bosworth (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Press, 1968), 141.

81. Tha’ālibī, 127, trans. Bosworth, 141 (Babylonians); Minorsky, *Marwazī*, 3 (text), 14 (trans.) (Byzantine). This story continued to circulate in the Mongol period as well and is cited in the report of Clavijo, the Spanish ambassador to Tamerlane who visited Samarqand in 1403–6.

82. Al-Bīrūnī, *Jawāhir*, 369–370; Gray, “The Export of Chinese Porcelain,” 231–234.

83. Aḥmad b. Yūsuf al-Tifāshī, *Azhār al-afkār fī jawāhir al-aḥjār*, ed. M. Y. Ḥasan and M. B. Khafājī (Cairo: al-Hay’ah al-Miṣriyya al-‘Ammā lil-Kitāb, 1977), 195.

would have been more profitable for any trader plying Liao merchandise in the Muslim world to describe it as Chinese rather than the lesser-known Kitan. In fact, porcelain — the main Liao item as per the archaeological record — was ascribed exclusively to China.⁸⁴

As for the organization of trade, the above-cited paragraph from the *Qidan guozhi* asserts that the Western states sent a delegation of about four hundred people to the Kitans once every three years. In return, the latter paid them at least four hundred thousand strings of cash for the goods.⁸⁵ There is nothing to suggest such orderly trade connections with the Qarakhanids. Likewise, as opposed to a considerable number of Northern Song coins, few Liao coins were found in the Qarakhanid realm.⁸⁶ That said, we may infer from several Muslim sources that the trade with Liao was quite regulated. For instance, the *Kutadgu Bilig* (*Wisdom of Royal Glory*), a Turkish mirror for princes compiled by Yūsuf Khāṣṣ Ḥājib (fl. 1070s) in Qarakhanid Balāsāghūn, includes a poem dedicated to the Qarakhanid Ulugh Bughra Khan Ḥasan son of Sulaymān (r. 1068–1102), and celebrating the colorful spring. One of its verses reads, “The Cathay caravan spread out its Chinese wares.”⁸⁷ In other words, Kitan caravans selling colorful Chinese merchandise had already become a popular metaphor. As per the testimony of Nizām al-Mulk, the celebrated Seljuq vizier (d. 1092), merchants of precious goods from China, Cathay (Khatā, i.e., the Liao domains), Egypt, and Aden (in Yemen) came to Ghazna during the reign of Maḥmūd of Ghazna.⁸⁸ Given the lack of information on Kitan merchants actually going abroad, this may refer to merchants that traded with the Kitans.

Nizām al-Mulk brings another story that is relevant to this discussion: Maḥmūd of Ghazna was jealous of the Qarakhanid khaqan of Samarqand for receiving three prestigious titles (including *malik al-shark wa'l-Ṣin*, King of the East and China) from the Abbasid caliph, for Maḥmūd himself had garnered but one honorific: *yamīn al-dawla* (right hand of the empire). Even after Maḥmūd's grand successes in India, the caliph refused to confer upon him any other title. In frustration, Maḥmūd promised to generously reward

84. See e.g. al-Bīrūnī, *Jawāhir*, 369–370.

85. Ye Longli, *Qidan guozhi*, 21.7a.

86. To the best of my knowledge, no Liao coins were found in the Qarakhanid realm, although a huge quantity of Northern Song coins was found in Xinjiang. See Biran, “Qarakhanid Studies,” 80; and Jiang Qixiang, *Xinjiang Hei Han chao qianbi*.

87. Yusuf Khass Hajib, *Wisdom of Royal Glory*, 41.

88. Nizām al-Mulk, *The Book of Government*, 302, trans. Darke, 249.

anyone that managed to bring him the charter that the caliph had imparted to the Qarakhanid khaqan, so that he could then use it as proof of his rival's disrespect for the Abbasids. A well-educated Turkish woman courtier volunteered for the task. With a generous allowance from Maḥmūd's treasury, she traveled to Kashgar along with her fourteen-year-old son. In Kashgar, she purchased Turkic slaves and "a large supply of choice goods imported from Cathay (Khaṭā) and Khotan, such as musk and various kinds of silk."⁸⁹ Maḥmūd's agent provocateur then traveled with the merchants to Samarqand, where she went to pay homage to the khatun, the khan's wife. Offering her a Turkish slave girl and an assortment of presents from India, Khotan, and Cathay (i.e., the Liao domains), she told the khatun that her husband, a merchant, had died in Khotan while the family was en route to Cathay. The widow and her son then returned to Kashgar, and received the permission of the ruling khaqan to go back to Samarqand. The agent said that she would be able to support herself and the boy by buying a house and a farm, and then asked the khatun to be her patron so that she could serve in the palace and settle down in Samarqand. The ruler's wife welcomed her, and the woman indeed remained in Samarqand. During this time, she cultivated a close relationship with the royal couple, but persistently refused their generous offers of villages and appanages. After six months, when the agent was certain of her standing, she asked for the caliphal charter—apparently under the pretense that her son, who was training to be a secretary, could imbibe the document's exquisite calligraphy and style. Without hesitation, the khatun had the charter brought from the treasury and handed it over to the agent. The latter then secured a letter of safe conduct for a trip aimed at finding a farm, whereupon she escaped to Ghazna and delivered the charter to Maḥmūd. However, the ruler only managed to obtain one additional title out of the whole affair.⁹⁰ Its dubious veracity notwithstanding, the story is instructive in several respects. To begin with, it suggests that Muslim merchants commonly traveled to the Liao domains (Cathay) via Kashgar and Khotan and that even families could make the trip. Second, it attests to the availability of Kitan (as well as Khotanese and Indian) goods, especially musk and silk, in Kashgar's markets.

89. The mentioned types of silk are *ḥarīr* (raw silk); KBRY/KSRY, which may be identical to the *kānzi* (KNZY) that Marwazī enumerates as one of the textiles brought by the Kitan embassy (see above); and *ṭarḡhū*, red silk. Nizām al-Mulk, *The Book of Government*, 192, 343.

90. Nizām al-Mulk, *The Book of Government*, 192–198, trans. Darke 153–160.

Third, it suggests that this merchandise was quite valuable, as it was apparently enough to purchase a house and farm. The image of the safe highways, though, conflicts with Marwazī's account of the long and obstructed roads to the Liao domains.⁹¹ Moreover, it is impossible to determine whether someone described as going to Cathay was planning to make the entire trip or was merely heading to a closer trading point.

Marwazī described the way to the Kitan's realm as taking four days from Kashgar to Yarkand, ten days on to Khotan, five days on to Keriya, and fifty days to Sājū (Shazhou, Dunhuang). So far this was the same way for anybody going to "China." In Shazhou the roads split, and those who were heading to Cathay continued eastwards to Khātūn San, the Liao city of Kedun 可敦, in present-day central Mongolia on the Tula River, a journey of about a month.⁹² From there, the travelers would proceed to Ūtkīn (the Ötüken Mountains in central Mongolia?), which also took thirty days to reach. The road ended two months later in the Kitan capital Ūjam, identified as the Liao Supreme Capital, Shangjing.⁹³ The whole trip lasted approximately seven months. An alternate route to the Liao domain ran further north. It passed through Gaochang (near Turfan in Xinjiang) instead of Dunhuang, and then onto Kedun. This was the way taken by Yelü Dashi in his westerly trek.⁹⁴ This northern route enabled merchants to circumvent the Tangut customs, which had been in effect since the conquest of Dunhuang around 1036. Although recent excavations at Kedun have unearthed a plethora of quotidian Chinese and even Bohai 渤海 artifacts, there is only limited evidence of more Western merchandise. That said, a few beads of glass at this site may suggest the presence of Muslim caravans.⁹⁵

Mutual Perceptions

How informed were the Liao and Muslim worlds about each other? Not much. It is extremely difficult to reconstruct what the Kitans knew about the Muslim

91. Minorsky, *Marvazī*, 7 (text), 21 (trans.).

92. Kedun is identified with Tsintolgoi Balgas, in Dashinchilen sum of Bulgan aimag of Mongolia, approximately 250 kilometers west-northwest from Ulaanbaatar. See N. N. Kradin, *Kidan'skii gorod Tsintolgoi Balgas* (Moscow: Vostochnaia literatura, 2011),

93. Minorsky, *Marvazī*, 6–7 (text), 18 (trans.), 70–73 (commentary).

94. For Yelü Dashi's complicated route, see Biran, *The Empire*, 35–39.

95. Kradin, *Kidan'skii gorod*; for the glass beads, see 155, picture 51.

polities. Apart from the terse entries on the embassies, and the account of Yelü Dashi's journey westwards to Dashi, they are mentioned in the *Liaoshi* only in the table of tributary states and in a couple of lists in three treatises (of the army, administration, and music), together with many other tributary states and without any details.⁹⁶ The existence of a Muslim community in Liao China, which probably consisted mainly of traders, is implied by the founding myth of Beijing's Ox Market Mosque (*Niujie libaisi* 牛街禮拜寺). According to this tale, the house of prayer was established around 996 by one Saihai Nasuluding (篩海那速魯定 Sheikh Naṣīr al-Dīn?), whose father had arrived from the Western Regions. However, since this tradition is based on a late inscription from 1781 and the tombs in the mosque are all dated to the Yuan period, it is not very credible.⁹⁷ Liao murals include certain scenes of Western Region "traditions," such as playing polo, hunting with cheetahs, and the taming of lions and elephants.⁹⁸ That said, none of these motifs are typically Muslim,⁹⁹ and they can easily be interpreted as a continuation of Tang traditions, which were strongly influenced by Central Asian (Turkish, Sogdian, and Iranian) culture.

Much of the meager concrete knowledge about Liao in the Muslim sources derived from information gathered from the Kitan embassy to Ghazna, described above. This was mainly due to the efforts of al-Bīrūnī (d. ca. 1050), one of the greatest medieval Muslim polymaths, whose interests encompassed, *inter alia*, geography, astronomy, pharmacology, mineralogy, comparative religion, and Indology. Al-Bīrūnī is frequently invoked as an interpreter of India for the Muslim world, but his role as a cultural broker with East Asia is largely ignored.¹⁰⁰ At any rate, he was at Maḥmūd's court when the Kitan embassy

96. *Liaoshi*, 36.430; 46.759; 54.889, 890; 69.123; 70.1155, 1156.

97. Jiang, Ma, and Yang, "Isilan jiao," 2; Ma Yao 马耀, "Niujie libaisi 1000 zhounian" 牛街禮拜寺 1,000 周年, *Huizu yanjiu* 回族研究 (1996.4): 85–87; and cf. Li Xinghua 李兴华, "Beijing Yisilanjiao yanjiu" 北京伊斯兰教研究, *Huizu yanjiu* 回族研究 (2004): 66; for another, more legendary version of the mosque's founding, see Dru C. Gladney, *Muslim Chinese: Ethnic Nationalism in the People's Republic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 175, 181, 183.

98. Sun Hong, "Xifang wenhua," 88–90, where some of the murals are reproduced; Yang and Chen, "Liaochao yu Dashi diguo," 39; Jiang, Ma, and Yang, "Isilan jiao," 2–3.

99. Cf. Yang and Chen, "Liaochao yu Dashi diguo," 39; Jiang, Ma, and Yang, "Isilan jiao," 2–3 describe affluent Muslims present in Liao China.

100. On al-Bīrūnī, see for example the entries in *Encyclopedia Iranica*, <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/biruni-abu-rayhan-index> (accessed January 2, 2012). His role as a cultural broker is reminiscent of the leading role played by Rashīd al-Dīn along the Mongol-Muslim-Chinese

arrived, and interviewed the emissary on various subjects, some of which are reflected in his post-1027 works. For example, he draws on this encounter for his information on *khutū*. Nevertheless, the fact that his later works employ the same toponyms that surface in Marwazī's report on the Kitan mission and the polymath's mention of the Qun and Qay suggest a common origin: either the emissary or the report on the delegation that Marwazī probably availed himself of.¹⁰¹ Al-Bīrūnī also collected data on the Kitans from other people: in his book on precious stones he quotes "a man who visited this place (i.e., Khotan)," who reports he once brought an especially large piece of jade to the Kitan ruler (*ṣāhib bilād Qitāi*).¹⁰² The full description of the twelve-animal calendar used by "the Chinese, the Turks, the Tibetans, and the Khotanese" that appears in Marwazī's book, and which Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūṣī, a renowned polymath in his own right (d. 1274), assures us al-Bīrūnī was aware of, was probably also the fruit of al-Bīrūnī's research, as he had completed a book about calendars before the embassy's arrival.¹⁰³ The animal calendar was perhaps the most lasting cultural imprint that the embassy left on the Muslim world.

axis. See Thomas Allsen, *Culture and Conquest in Mongol Eurasia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 72–82 and *passim*.

101. Al-Bīrūnī refers directly to his questioning of the "Kitan emissary" (*rasul Qitāy*) in *Kitāb al-Ṣaydanah*, ed. H. M. Said as *Al-Bīrūnī's Book on Pharmacy and Materia Medica* (Karachi: Hamdard National Foundation, 1973), 174 (text), 141 (trans.); see also Togan, *Bīrūnī's Picture*, 117. He asked him about *khutū*; see Hansen, "International Gifting," and King, "Early Islamic Sources" for the citation. Togan suggests that al-Bīrūnī's discussions with the "the emissary from the furthest land of the Turks" (*rasul min aqṣā bilād al-Turk*), which are mentioned in Yāqūt's entry on al-Bīrūnī in his biographical dictionary *Irshād al-arīb* ([Beirut: Dār al-'Arab, 1993], 5: 2332–3), also refer to the same emissary. According to Yāqūt's version, al-Bīrūnī asked about what the messenger saw in the lands beyond the sea, towards the South Pole (!) where the sun shines all day and the night stops. If the South Pole is simply mistaken for the North Pole, then the information is plausible. Togan, however, asserts that in all the manuscripts of Bayhaqī, from whom he claims that Yāqūt takes this episode, the reference is to the South Pole. His assertion that the emissary was a Muslim who arrived in Ghazna via the maritime route from India (and was thus familiar with the south) is less tenable. Togan, *Bīrūnī's Picture*, 119.

102. Al-Bīrūnī, *Jawāhir*, 317.

103. Al-Bīrūnī's calendrical work, *al-Āthār al-bāqiyah 'an al-qurūn al-khālīyah* (Surviving traces from bygone eras), translated into English from Sachau's German translation (Leipzig, 1878) as *The Chronology of Ancient Nations* (London, 1879) was composed around the year 1000. See D. J. Boilot, "al-Bīrūnī (Bērūnī) Abū 'l-Rayḥān Muḥammad b. Aḥmad," *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition* (Brill Online, 2012) (accessed December 29, 2011). Interestingly, the work ended up in the Yuan Imperial Library Directorate, where it was used by Chinese astronomers; Allsen, *Culture and Conquest*, 170. Al-Bīrūnī was probably one of Marwazī's sources.

Later Muslim references to the calendar, which under Mongol rule became quite popular in the eastern Islamic world, indeed refer to the Kitans and Uighurs, namely the 1026 embassy, as their source for this information.¹⁰⁴ The Kitans also appear on al-Bīrūnī's list of peoples that practiced intercalation, along with the Chinese and eastern Turk (i.e., the Qitā, Uighurs, Tibetans, and Khotanese).¹⁰⁵

In addition to calendrical issues, the embassy also provided important geographical information on the roads leading to the Kitan lands and elaborated on some of the area's inhabitants. However, it seems as though even al-Bīrūnī was not altogether sure of where the "land of Qitā" was: in his *Kitāb al-Taḥḥīm li awā'il ṣinā'at al-tanjīm* (*Book of Instruction in the Elements of the Art of Astrology*) of 1029, al-Bīrūnī located Qitā in the fourth climate that "begins with China (arḍ al-Ṣīn) and Tibet, Qitāy and Khotan."¹⁰⁶ However, in the encyclopedia he compiled the following year (1030), *al-Qānūn al-Mas'ūdī* (*Mas'ūdī's Canon of Astronomy*), Qitā is located in the second climate, and even provided with specific coordinates: "Qitā is in the east of al-Ṣīn and on its north, its ruler is called Qitā Khan, Long. 148 40 Lat. 21 40."¹⁰⁷ This two-fold location probably explains why al-Bīrūnī did not include the Kitan land on his map.¹⁰⁸

Another prominent trait of the Kitans is their dual Turkic-Chinese identity.

104. Minorsky, *Marvazī*, 9 (text), 21 (trans.); for Ṭūṣī's assertion, see Togan, *Bīrūnī's Picture*, 118; for later uses, see, for example Ibn al-Muhanā (d. 1425), as cited in Minorsky, *Marvazī*, 80; and Aḥmad ibn 'Alī al-Maqrīzī (d. 1442), *al-Mawā'iz wa-li'tibār fī dhikr al-khiṭaṭ wa-al-āthār* (London: Mu'assasat al-Furqān lil-Turāth al-Islāmī, 2002), 1:681–682, 684; for the animal calendar in Mongol Iran, see Charles Melville, "The Chinese-Uighur Animal Calendar in Persian Historiography of the Mongol Period," *Iran* 32 (1994): 83–98.

105. Abū Rayhan al-Bīrūnī, *al-Qānūn al-Ma'sūdī* (Hyderabad: Osmaniya Oriental Publication Bureau, 1954), 1:92 (the text reads "Qibā" but should read "Qitā").

106. Abū Rayhan al-Bīrūnī, *Kitāb al-taḥḥīm li-awā'il ṣinā'at al-tanjīm*, *The Book of Instruction in the Elements of the Art of Astrology*, ed. and trans. R. Ramsay Wright, reproduced from Brit. Mus. Ms. Or. 8349; the translation facing the text (London: Luzac and Co., 1934), 144. The Qitāy, thus rendered by Ramsay Wright, is read Qibāy in the manuscript.

107. Al-Bīrūnī, *Qānūn*, 2:554; Togan, *Bīrūnī's Picture*, 19, no. 125.

108. For the map, see al-Bīrūnī, *Taḥḍīd nihāyat al-amākin li-taṣḥīḥ masāfāt al-masākin*, ed. M. ibn Tāwīt al-Ṭanjī (Ankara: Doğus, 1962), 107; Togan, *Bīrūnī's Picture*, 61. The book in which the map appears, however, was compiled before 1025, namely before the arrival of the Kitan embassy. For mapping in the Chinese and Islamic worlds, see Hyunhee Park, *Mapping the Chinese and Islamic Worlds: Cross-Cultural Exchange in Pre-Modern Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), ch. 3.

Al-Bīrūnī calls them “the Turks of the East” (*atrāk al-mashrik* or *al-atrāk al-mashrikiyya*).¹⁰⁹ He also locates Qitā in the domain of the Turks,¹¹⁰ while defining Khatā as a region of China (*min diyār al-Šīn*).¹¹¹ Maḥmūd al-Kāshgarī (fl. 1070s) deems the Kitans to be Turks, yet asserts that Khitāy is known as China.¹¹² Likewise, Marwazī explains that Khatā is part of China. This dual identity, which is also evident in the Muslim attitude towards the Qara Khitai,¹¹³ did not constitute a problem for Muslim authors. As we have already seen, the boundaries between China and Turkestan were rather blurred. Moreover, according to the *Mujmal al-tawārīkh wa-l kuṣṣaṣ* (*Collection of Histories and Anecdotes*), which was written in 1126 in Seljuq Iran, the forefathers of the Chinese and the Turks (Chīn and Turk, respectively) were brothers, the sons of Japheth, the son of Noah.¹¹⁴

Apart from their dual identity, calendar, and imprecise location, the Muslims' knowledge of the Kitans before the arrival of the Qara Khitai can be summarized as follows: the Kitans were not Muslims; they were mainly polytheists, but members of all the area's religions—save for Judaism—lived among them;¹¹⁵ their ruler was known as king (*malik*), khan, or *faghfūr*;¹¹⁶ he ruled by the grace of Heaven and wore only crimson clothes;¹¹⁷ their capital, Ūjam, was a seven-day journey from the sea and about seven months from Kashgar; the city was two *farsakh* (11–12 kilometers) wide and was surrounded by a fence of sticks, which was guarded by patrols;¹¹⁸ tea (*chā'ī*) grew in their

109. Al-Bīrūnī, *Jawāhir*, 317, 242; al-Bīrūnī, *Qānūn*, 1:92.

110. Togan, *Bīrūnī's Picture*, 19 (no. 125); al-Bīrūnī, *Qānūn*, 1:92.

111. Al-Bīrūnī, *Ṣaydana*, 132 (text), 107 (trans.).

112. Maḥmūd al-Kāshgarī, *Dīwān lughāt al-Turk* (Compendium of the Turkic Dialects), trans. R. Dankoff and J. Kelly (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1982–85), 1:341.

113. Biran, *The Empire*, 93, 143–146.

114. Anonymous, *Mujmal al-tawārīkh wa'l-kisas* (Tehran: Duniyā-i Kitāb, 1383/2005), 99. Japheth is mentioned as the father of both the Chinese and the Turks in many other Muslim sources, but usually the relations between the two as well as among them and Japheth are more remote. The Kitans are not mentioned in the *Mujmal*.

115. Minorsky, *Marvazī*, 6 (text), 17 (trans.); 'Awfī, *Lubāb al-albāb*, 539.

116. *Faghfūr*, which is the old Persian equivalent of Tianzi 天子, was the title of the Chinese emperor in the Muslim world. Minūchihīrī, one of the court poets of Maḥmūd of Ghazna, uses both *Faghfūr-i Khitāy* and *Faghfūr-i Chīnī*, thereby attesting to the existence of “Two Sons of Heaven” in his time; Minūchihīrī, *Dīwān-i Minūchihīrī Dāmghānī*. 58, 150.

117. Al-Bīrūnī, *Jawāhir*, 112.

118. Minorsky, *Marvazī*, 7 (text), 18 (trans.); Ūjam is identified as Shangjing, the Liao Supreme Capital, which was on the Ujei Moren River. I cannot explain the fence.

lands.¹¹⁹ Unlike the Chinese, they interfered with the Turks; the Uighurs were their vassals,¹²⁰ and they wrote some of their letters in Turkic. Additionally, they maintained a matrimonial alliance and exchanged letters with the Qarakhanids. The Kitans' top export was musk, but they also supplied furs, textiles, pearls, gold and silver objects, zedoary,¹²¹ and beautiful moon-faced slaves. Lastly, they had a craving for *khutū* and amber.¹²²

Such information, albeit limited and not always accurate, was available to al-Bīrūnī and a few of his students, and perhaps to some experts in perfumery, jewelry, or trade. For most Muslims, however, *Khatā*, if known as all, was mainly an appellation for a remote place on the eastern fringes of the world.¹²³

This superficial knowledge does not seem to have changed much even during the reign of the Qara Khitai in the Muslim world, or at the very least this is what can be concluded from the sources of this poorly documented dynasty. As I have shown elsewhere, the Qara Khitai skillfully used their dual Chinese and Turkic image to gain legitimation in the Muslim world. For the Muslims at least, they preferred to highlight the prestigious notion of China rather than the more obscure notion of the Liao or Kitan. Therefore, we have very few details about the Qara Khitai past, apart from the fact that

119. Al-Bīrūnī, *Ṣaydana*, 128–129 (text), 105 (trans.). Tea did not grow in the Liao domains, but it was an important item in Song-Liao trade. Tea drinking was common among the Kitan Han elite, as attested in the Xuanhua tombs murals from 1090–1117, where the process of preparing tea and tea ceremony are depicted in eight frescoes; Li Qingquan 李清泉, *Xuanhua Liaomu: Muzang yishu yu Liaodai shehui* 宣化遼墓: 墓葬藝術與遼代社會 (The Liao-dynasty tombs of Xuanhua: Tomb art and Liao-era society) (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 2008), 1:372, 2: plates 5, 6, 7, 66, 75, 78, 112, 115. In 1087 Khotanese envoys bought tea from Song; Hartwell, *Tribute Missions*, 58.

120. Minorsky, *Marvazī*, 5 (text), 15 (trans.).

121. Zedoary (*jadwār*, *Curcuma zedoaria*, or white turmeric) is a plant used for spice, perfume, and medicine. It is native to India and Indonesia, where it grows in tropical and subtropical wet forests. Hence it did not grow in the Kitan lands but perhaps reached them from Southeast Asia. Al-Bīrūnī, *Ṣaydana*, 132 (text), 107 (trans.); <http://www.theepicentre.com/Spices/zedoary.html> (accessed January 12, 2012); Schafer, *Golden Peaches*, 185–186, where he mentions that Muslim sources contemporaneous with the Tang described zedoary as Chinese.

122. See nn. 53 and 62 above.

123. This is apparent especially in Seljuq chronicles; see e.g. Muḥammad b. 'Alī Rāwandī, *Rāḥat al-ṣudūr wa-āyat al-surūr*, ed. M. Iqbāl (London: Luzac, 1921), 130; Nīshāpūrī, *Zāhir al-Dīn, The Saljūqnāma of Zāhir al-Dīn Nīshāpūrī: A Critical Text Making Use of the Unique Manuscript in the Library of the Royal Asiatic Society*, ed. A. H. Morton (Warminster: Gibb Memorial Trust, 2004), 60.

they arrived from China.¹²⁴ However, modest as they may be, recent findings from Central Asia suggest that certain aspects of Liao material culture were evident in Central Asia under Qara Khitai rule. Besides the aforementioned Liao saddle ornament, a book written in Kitan large script was discovered in Kyrgyzstan — the heartland of the Qara Khitai — during the 1950s and recently described by Zaitsev. This intriguing document is the only extant Kitan book and by far the longest example of any text written in the Kitan large script. The book was written after 1054, and while its contents are still undeciphered, the frequent occurrence of the Kitan characters for “state” and “emperor” suggests that the manuscript may be a work of history or an official document.¹²⁵ With respect to both the ornament and book, it is unclear whether the item was locally produced or brought to Central Asia by the migrating Kitans. I suspect that the average Muslim during the period at hand would have viewed these objects as “Chinoiserie,” and not necessarily as specific Kitan products.

Liao and the Muslim polities were on the fringes of each other's geographical and cultural worlds. So while contacts between Muslim dynasties, mainly the Qarakhanids, and Liao inevitably took place, the extent and influence of these ties is hard to assess. While there are images of Khitai from the pens of Muslim poets, scientists, geographers, and historians, there is nothing equivalent from the hands of Kitans. The picture, then, is necessarily one-sided. In addition, while the fact that the word “Khitāy” became a synonym for China suggests considerable amount of interaction, this is not the picture that emerges from the, albeit problematic, sources. Whereas the Qara Khitai bolstered the correlation between the two terms, the wide use of “Khitāy” as the name for China was largely the fruit of the Mongol period, as *kitad* in Mongolian means “northern China.”¹²⁶

124. See Biran, *The Empire*, ch. 1.

125. Viacheslav P. Zaitsev, “Rukopisnaja kniga bol'shogo kidan'skogo pis'ma iz kollekcii Instituta vostochnykh rukopisej RAN,” *Pismennye Pamyatniki Vostoka* 15 (2011): 130–150. I would like to thank the author for sending me a copy of his article. See also http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nova_N_176 (accessed September 18, 2012).

126. *Kitad* was the name given by the Mongols to the inhabitants of northern China (Kitans, Jurchen, Han) after the Kitan founders of Liao, who, as mentioned before, left their mark on Mongolia. Gradually the name began to refer to the territory of northern China; in modern Mongolian *Kitad* (Khalka: *xuatad*) still means “Chinese.” See Igor de Rachewiltz, trans. and annot., *The Secret History of the Mongols: A Mongolian Epic Chronicle of the Thirteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 1:302. This is similar to the usage of *Tanghaj*, the Turkic name for China which originates in the *Tuoba* 拓拔, the name of the ruling clan of the Northern Wei dynasty

While direct contacts were infrequent, Liao's relations with the Muslim world were part and parcel of the extensive east-west contacts that prevailed during this era and stand out despite the paucity of source material. The means of exchange were diverse and included private merchants, tribute, princely gifts, and plunder. This exchange was mainly indirect and multi-phased, as the goods were continually recycled and redirected. Liao porcelain and Muslim glass and metalwork had an impact on one another's artistic traditions, even though this influence was not always credited to its specific source.¹²⁷ Objects of diverse origins—from the Song, Liao, Tibet, Xixia, and Eastern Turkistan—that ended up in the Muslim world were all evaluated and appreciated within the same framework: an artistic tradition they labeled “China” (and later “Khitāy”). On the other hand, Muslim goods were grouped with other “Western” merchandise. Squeezed in between the halcyon days of the Tang-Abbasid connections and the Mongol dominion, the period from the tenth to the twelfth century is one of the most neglected periods in the history of the Silk Roads.¹²⁸ As the contributions to this volume testify, this chapter of Eurasian history deserves to be studied in its own right. While undoubtedly a challenging task, a comprehensive exposition of east-west contacts, both maritime and continental, will also enable us to understand the links between the splendor of the Tang-Abbasid exchange and the thriving far-flung connections of the Mongol period.

Economic exchange and artistic traditions notwithstanding, the Kitan's main impact on the Muslim world was the population movements that were engendered by Liao's rise and rule, displacements that triggered Turkic Islami-

(386–534). It was disseminated due to its use in the Turkic world (e.g. in eighth-century Orkhon inscriptions) long after the demise of the Wei dynasty. See Jiang Qixiang, *Xinjiang Hei Han chao qianbi*, 106–7.

127. Gray, “Export of Chinese Porcelain,” 233; Crowe, “Early Islamic Pottery,” 271; Ma Wenkuan, “Liaomu Liaota,” 739; Yang and Chen, “Liaochao yu Dashi diguo,” 39; Jiang, Ma, and Yang, “Isilan jiao,” 2.

128. See e.g. Liu Xinru, *The Silk Road in World History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 110–111; Liu Xinru and Lynda N. Shaffer, *Connections across Eurasia: Transportation, Communication, and Cultural Exchange on the Silk Roads* (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2007). The only mention of the Liao is to be found on page 232, in an account on Yeli Chucai, the Mongols' Kitan advisor. The Qarakhanids do not even come up in the index; Christopher Beckwith, *Empires of the Silk Roads* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), 167–175. None of these sources dedicate more than a few pages, at most, to this period. For earlier examples, see Biran, “Qarakhanid Studies,” 87 n. 30.

zation and culminated with the migration of the Kitans themselves into the Islamic world.

In Central Asia the migrating Kitans who established the Qara Khitai dynasty skillfully exploited the dual image of Khitāy as both Turks—strong and aggressive military people—and Chinese—prestigious rulers with unparalleled skills and material culture—for securing legitimacy in the Muslim world. This legitimation enabled them to rule over a substantial Muslim population without converting to Islam.¹²⁹ However, after the Qara Khitai fell to the Mongols in 1218, those Kitans that remained in the Muslim world—whether as members of the Mongol army in Central Asia, Iran, or Eastern Europe, as slaves sold to Egypt and Delhi, or as the rulers of the Qara Khitai dynasty of Kirmān (in southern Iran) under Mongol and Ilkhanid hegemony (1222–1306)—gradually embraced Islam, thereby opening a new stage in the relations between the Kitans and the Muslim world.¹³⁰

129. Biran, *The Empire*, esp. 196–201.

130. See Michal Biran, “Kitan Migrations in Eurasia 10th–14th Centuries,” *Journal of Central Eurasian Studies* 3 (2012): 85–108.