

# Between the Islamic World and Liao China

## 1 Introduction

The Qarakhanid Khaganate, known in Song China as Khotan (Yutian), as well as other territories of the west that had previously been known as the Western Regions (Xiyu), was classified as *waiquo* “outside country” in *Song shi* and appeared in Chapter 490 together with India (Tianzhu), Turfan (Gaochang), the Ganzhou Uyghurs (Huigu), Arab and non-Arab Islamic polities (Dashi), the Saljuq Empire (Cengtan), the Kucha Kingdom (Qiuci), Dunhuang (Shazhou), and Rum (Fulin).<sup>1</sup> The term “Western Regions” was mainly used in *Song shi* to mean India in the context of Indian Buddhist monks who had traveled to China.

The unique geographical and political position of the Qarakhanids demonstrates on the one hand how closely they were connected to the Chinese world by controlling the former “indirect” territories of China and later being under the sinicized Qara Khitai supremacy. The Qara Khitai not only incorporated Transoxiana, Zhetysu, and Kashgharia into their empire, but also established their domain in Turfan as a suzerain of the Uyghur Idiquts and established trade networks in these territories, simplifying the process of trade. On the other hand, the Qarakhanids also had direct access to the trade network of the Islamic world through their relations with the Ghaznavids, the Saljuqs, and the Khwarazmshahs. Islamic sources recorded gift and commodities exchanges between the Qarakhanids and other Turko-Islamic dynasties, which informs us not only about luxury goods coming from other parts of the Islamic world to the Qarakhanids but also about Chinese commodities that reached the Islamic world via the Qarakhanids. This information cannot be obtained from Chinese sources, since the latter only recorded goods coming to China from the Qarakhanid realm. The list of these gifts not only gives us an idea of what kinds of commodities a particular state was able to send but also gives an idea of what may have traveled with merchants between the Islamic and Chinese worlds.

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1 *Song shi*, 490: 14103–14125. Some materials used in this chapter were initially published in: Dilnoza Duturaeva, “Between the Silk and Fur Roads: Qarakhanid Diplomacy and Trade,” *Orientierungen: Zeitschrift zur Kultur Asiens* 28 (2016): 173–212.

As mentioned above the Qarakhanids established diplomatic relations with most of the neighboring Turko-Islamic dynasties, strengthened by marriage alliances. The Qarakhanids also frequently sent official envoys to the 'Abbasid Caliphs in Baghdad. Ibn al-Fuwatī (1244–1326), in his biographical dictionary, using contemporary sources that have not survived, recorded that the Qarakhanid ruler Ibrahim ibn Nasr, who was known as *Tafghāch al-Türkistānī*, sent annual envoys to the court of Caliph al-Qa'im (1031–1075).<sup>2</sup> Ibn al-Fuwatī did not provide information on gift exchanges during these visits. Arab envoys in the land of the Turks used luxurious robes ("robes of honor"), veils, pepper, millet, bread, raisins, and walnuts as diplomatic gifts, as they were so highly prized by the Turks that they did not allow passage through their lands if they did not receive them.<sup>3</sup> What could the Qarakhanids present to the Caliphs or other Muslim rulers? They sent indigenous products as well as trade commodities coming from other places. The Qarakhanid poet Yūsuf Khāṣṣ Ḥājib from Balasaghun recorded that they obtained from merchants all the worlds' rarities, including sable fur, silk from China (Khitāy), and pearls.<sup>4</sup>

The Qarakhanids selected well-qualified envoys and trained them extensively. For instance, the Qarakhanid mirror for princes *Qutadghu Bilig* provided a long list of requirements for a good envoy (*yalawach*):

The envoy ought to be choicest of mankind, wise, intelligent and courageous ... the envoy must be intelligent, steady, and wise, and a good interpreter of words ... He should be loyal, content in eye and heart, reliable, sincere and upright ... He should be modest, quiet-mannered, and discreet, but also worldly-wise ... he should know how to draw up all sorts of documents, how to read and write, and how to listen ... He should be not only well-read and well-spoken, but also well-versed in poetry and himself able to compose. He ought further to have some knowledge of astrology and medicine, and the interpretation of dreams, also arithmetic, geometry, trigonometry, and cadaster. Then he should be able to play backgammon and chess, well enough to make his rivals howl. He should excel in polo and in archery, also in fowling and in hunting. Finally, he must know all tongues when he opens his mouth to speak, and know all scripts when he takes pen to hand ... The man sent as envoy must be very virtuous, excelling his adversaries in every kind of negotiation ... He

2 *Talkhīṣ majma' al-ādāb fi mu'jam al-alqāb*, ed. Jawar, 650–651; for the Qarakhanid envoys to the Caliphs, also see *Al-Kāmil fi al-ta'rīkh*, ed. Tornberg vol. 9, 212–213; *Al-Kāmil fi al-ta'rīkh*, trans. and ed. Bulgakov and Kamoliddin, 186, 188.

3 *Risāla* / Ibn Fadlān, trans. Lunde and Stone, 14, 17, 19, 21.

4 *Qutadghu Bilig*, trans. Dankoff 58; for the Turkic text, see *Qutadghu bilig*, ed. and trans. Arat, vol. 1, 445.

should be able to grasp what people say quickly and to be ready with the proper answer. So he must not drink wine but rather must keep in control of himself ... He must have a good mind and a skilled tongue ... He should be handsome of appearance, neat and trim, and of good stature. And he should be valiant and high-minded – these two qualities are the measure of a man's worth. Finally, he should be soft-spoken and honey-tongued, for the great and the small alike soften at sweet words.<sup>5</sup>

To sum up, Qarakhanid envoys should be intelligent and well-educated, proficient in foreign languages and scripts, poetry and science, archery and hunting, polo and chess, have good manners and appearance, and be lifelong teetotalers.

What did the Qarakhanids import to the Islamic world? Diplomatic gifts sent from the Qarakhanids serve as a fine illustration of commodities that were prized in the Islamic world and could also be involved in trade. The Qarakhanids supplied local products from Turkistan and rarities brought from China, such as silk and various type of fine fabrics, precious metals such as gold and silver, and high-quality Chinese vessels. The Qarakhanids also had access to the spice-trade network of China and India via well-established relations with the Liao and the Song dynasties in China and the Ghaznavids in Khurasan and al-Hind.

Qarakhanid relations with the Ghaznavids are well documented, especially compared to other polities in the Islamic world. Therefore, this case will be used to demonstrate the Qarakhanid diplomacy and commercial activity in the region. During the same period, the Qarakhanids were the nearest Muslim neighbors of the Liao emperors in China, who sought to establish contact with the Islamic world more than other Sinitic dynasties of the era. The Khitans not only established marriage relations with the Qarakhanids, but also (probably under their influence) sent an official envoy to Ghazna seeking a marriage alliance with Sultan Mahmud. In this chapter, I will also discuss the Liao case to illustrate the role of the Qarakhanids in Sino-Islamic relations.

## 2 Gifting between the Qarakhanids and the Islamic World: The Ghaznavid Case

The political alliance with the Ghaznavids opened access to the Indian trade network and luxury goods for the Qarakhanids. Sultan Mahmud of Ghazna, who intended to strengthen his northern borders, sent an envoy to the

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<sup>5</sup> *Qutadghu bilig*, trans. Dankoff, 125–127; for the Turkic, text see *Qutadghu bilig*, ed. and trans. Arat, vol. 1, 273–280.

Qarakhanid court in 1001 to establish a peace treaty through a marriage alliance. The Ghaznavid historian al-'Utbī (d. 1023), who served as a court secretary, recorded the luxury goods coming from the Ghaznavid to the Qarakhanid realm:

Curious pieces of pure gold with jacinths and rubies;  
 Chains of great and small pearls;  
 Gifts of robes;  
 Eggs of amber;  
 Vessels of gold and silver full of perfumes of camphor and other productions of the provinces of India made from frankincense-bearing trees;  
 Damascus scimitars;  
 War elephants adorned with many colored trappings and jeweled bits;  
 Celebrated horses with ornaments and head-trappings of gold.<sup>6</sup>

In the long list of gifts, only horses were indigenous products of the nomads in the Ghaznavid land. Chinese sources also confirm a great deal of horse and camel breeding in the Ghaznavid realm.<sup>7</sup> The majority of items in the list came from India, such as various precious stones, pearls, perfumery, and elephants. However, some of these goods were not produced in India. Camphor, for instance, came to the land of the Ghaznavids from Southeast Asia. The main exporter of camphor was the city-state Sanfoqi (Srivijaya),<sup>8</sup> which also controlled passages from Arabia to China.<sup>9</sup> Another interesting gift mentioned in this list is frankincense, which was one of the most treasured drugs and aromatics in international trade and especially prized in Song China. In the eleventh century, frankincense was mainly produced in South Arabia and transported to Song China via Southeast Asia in a major scope by maritime road.<sup>10</sup> However, in the list of the Ghaznavid goods, we can see how this item from South Arabia arrived via Ghazna to the Qarakhanids, who then transported it to China via overland road. Frankincense is also native to India and traded in the region. However, Indian frankincense and its production are rarely mentioned in historical narratives of the relevant period. It seems that there was less demand for Indian frankincense in the Islamic world. For instance, al-Bīrūnī recorded

6 *Kitāb al-Yamīnī*, trans. Reynolds, 316.

7 *Zhu fan zhi*, trans Hirth and Rockhill, 138.

8 Sanfoqi or Srivijaya was a city-state located on the island of Sumatra, Indonesia.

9 *Zhu fan zhi*, trans Hirth and Rockhill, 60–62, 193–194.

10 Angela Schottenhammer, "Transfer of Xiangyao 香藥 from Iran and Arabia to China – A Reinvestigation of Entries in the Youyang zazu 西陽雜俎 (863)," in *Aspects of the Maritime Silk Road: From the Persian Gulf to the East China Sea*, ed. Ralph Kauz (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2010), 130.

that the quality of Indian frankincense was lower comparable to the Arabian variety.<sup>11</sup> Likely for this reason, Arabian frankincense was more prized in Central Asia and China during the eleventh century.

The Qarakhanids had also been interested in an agreement with the Ghaznavids and sent a Qarakhanid princess to marry Sultan Mahmud providing luxurious goods from their realm:

The unequaled pearl found in Turkistan;  
Valuable specimens of the purchased articles of Turkistan;  
Pure gold and silver;  
Sweet musk;  
High-bred horses;  
Moon-faced slaves;  
Well-featured girls;  
White falcons;  
Packets of peacock feathers;  
Ermines;  
Tawny skins;  
Exquisite China vessels;  
Beautiful fabrics.<sup>12</sup>

The list demonstrates that the Qarakhanids were capable of exporting not only local products but also commodities from China such as fine vessels and fabrics that most likely refer to Chinese porcelain and silk. Chinese porcelain became highly developed during the Song dynasty. For instance, blue and white porcelain, which was a highly prized commodity of the medieval world, was one of the greatest inventions of Song China<sup>13</sup> and it was shipped to the West not only via maritime roads but also by the Qarakhanids via the Tangut and Uyghur territories. For instance, examples of porcelain imported from China were unearthed in the Afrasiyab site in Samarqand, the capital of the western Qarakhanids.<sup>14</sup> Recent discoveries of the c. 50,000 pottery shards in the medieval citadel of Taraz, both of local manufacture and imported from

11 *Kitāb al-ṣaydana fī al-ṭibb*, ed. and trans. Said, 291, Arabic text, 329–330.

12 *Kitāb al-Yamīnī*, trans. Reynolds, 317. This marriage alliance was also mentioned by Ibn al-Athīr and al-Qarshī. *Al-Kāmil fī al-tārīkh*, ed. Tornberg, vol. 9, 133; *Al-Kāmil fī al-tārīkh*, trans. Bulgakov and Kamoliddin, 177; *Mulhaqāt al-ṣurāh*, trans. Vohidov and Aminov, 105–107.

13 Adam T. Kessler, *Song Blue and White Porcelain on the Silk Road* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 1–9.

14 Ludmila Sokolovskaia and Axelle Rougeulle, “Stratified Finds of Chinese Porcelains from Pre-Mongol Samarkand (Afrasiyab),” *Bulletin of the Asia Institute* 6 (1992): 87–98. I will discuss the porcelain trade in Chapter 6.

other regions of the Khaganate indicate the role of the Qarakhanids in ceramic trade.<sup>15</sup> However, it should be noted that porcelain ware was fragile and probably, for this reason, merchants preferred to transport it by sea. That explains the rarity of finding of porcelain samples along the continental Silk Road cities during the pre-Mongol period.

The Qarakhanids offered musk, which was a class of aromatic substances commonly used as base notes in perfumery and highly prized in the Islamic world. It was a standard component of descriptions of paradise and much celebrated in Islamic poetry.<sup>16</sup> An interesting fact is that musk was not produced in central parts of the Islamic world but was imported from Central Asia. There were several types of musk based on geographical origin, the best one of which, according to the Ghaznavid scholar al-Bīrūnī, was Khitan (Qitāy) musk.<sup>17</sup> Tibet had been also one of the main exporters of musk to the Islamic world since the eighth century. Tibetan musk first arrived in Transoxiana and India, and then passed further to the Islamic world by land and maritime roads respectively.<sup>18</sup> The Qarakhanids continued to obtain musk from Tibet and like the Sogdian merchants shipped it to other Muslim states.<sup>19</sup>

According to the list, it seems that in the slave trade the Qarakhanids had also replaced that of the Samanids, who were one of the main suppliers of slaves in the Islamic world. By the ninth century, the Samanids had developed a brisk trade in slaves coming from the steppe zones, chiefly Turkic nomads captured in warfare.<sup>20</sup> The Samanids turned this not only into a highly profitable business but also used slaves as a portion of their taxes and gifts. Turkish military slaves, as well as slave girls from Bukhara and concubines from Samarqand, were described as one of the wonders of the world in Islamic sources.<sup>21</sup> Kashghar markets were famous for commodities imported from China and slave trade in the Turko-Islamic world during the Qarakhanids.<sup>22</sup>

15 Dawkes, and Jorayev, "A Case of an Early Islamic city in Transoxiana," 23.

16 For the value and descriptions of musk in Arabic sources, see Akasoy and Yoeli-Tlalim, "Along the Musk Routes," 217–240; Anya King, "The Importance of Imported Aromatics in Arabian Culture: Illustrations from Pre-Islamic and Early Islamic Poetry," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 67, no. 3 (2008): 175–189.

17 *Kitāb al-ṣaydana fī al-ṭibb*, ed. and trans. Said, 304, Arabic text 345; Said reads Qitāy as Qunāi. Karimov reads this word correctly as Qitāy, see *Kitāb al-ṣaydana fī al-ṭibb*, trans. Karimov, 810.

18 King, "Eastern Islamic Rulers," 148.

19 For the description on Tibetan musk dears, see *Dīwān lughāt al-Turk*, trans. Auezova, 339.

20 Golden, *Central Asia in World History*, 64–66.

21 *Laṭā'if al-ma'ārif*, trans. Bosworth, 145–146.

22 *Siyāsatnāma*, trans. Darke, 155.

Not only official envoys but also meetings between monarchs were organized. Conflicts between two newly islamized Turkic states were surpassed by friendly contacts and frequently marriage alliances. The Ghaznavid historian Gardizī recorded an official meeting in 1025 between Sultan Mahmud of Ghazna and the Qarakhanid ruler Yusuf Qadir Khan in Samarqand. Yusuf Qadir Khan who was “the leader in all Turkistan and the Great Khan”<sup>23</sup> arrived from Kashghar to personally meet Sultan Mahmud of Ghazna.

Per diplomatic protocol, both sides exchanged opulent gifts. The Ghaznavids presented highly prized commodities from Khurasan, India, West Asia, and Transcaucasia, demonstrating that the Ghaznavids had been also actively involved in the maritime trade:

Gold and silver vessels;  
 Precious stones;  
 Rarities from Baghdad;  
 Fine fabrics;  
 Priceless weapons;  
 Costly horses with gold bridles and goads studded with jewels;  
 Ten female elephants with gold bridles and goads studded with jewels;  
 Camels from Barda'a<sup>24</sup> with gold trappings;  
 Litters for camels with gold and silver sticks, belts and bells;  
 Litters with embroidered brocade and woven patterns;  
 Precious carpets from Armenia, *uwaysi* and multicolored rugs;  
 Pieces of embroidered cloth;  
 Rose-colored fabric from Tabaristan with decoration;  
 Indian swords;  
*Qamari* aloes;<sup>25</sup>

23 *Zayn al-akhbār*, ed. Ḥabībī, 187.

24 Barda'a or Bardha'a – the chief city of the Islamic province Arran (in eastern Transcaucasia) until the tenth century; present-day Barda city in Azerbaijan. During this time, Barda'a, like Arran in general, retained a substantial proportion of Christians and barely counted as one of the lands of Islam. The Caliphs periodically appointed governors and Muslims had settled in this region but the majority of the population remained Christian until Timur Kuragan (1370–1405) invaded this region in the end of the fourteenth century, when this land became Turkic and Islamic, forming present-day Azerbaijan. Clifford E. Bosworth, “Bardha'a,” *Encyclopædia Iranica*, ed. Ehsan Yarshater (New York: Encyclopædia Iranica Foundation, 1988), III/7, 779–780, <https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/bardaa-or-bardaa-arm>.

25 *'ūd-i Qamārī* – incense widely used in the Islamic world for religious and special occasions. In Arabic, it was understood to mean “the wood of the moon.” However, this is a corruption from the *'ūd-i Qimārī*, which means “Khmer aloe.” Qimār is an Arabic name

*Maqasiri* sandalwood;<sup>26</sup>  
 Grey amber;  
 Female donkeys;  
 Skins of Barbary<sup>27</sup> panthers;  
 Hunting dogs;  
 Falcons and eagles trained to hunt cranes;  
 Gazelles and other game animals.<sup>28</sup>

Among the list of gifts that ordered to be given by the Qarakhanid ruler to Sultan Mahmud of Ghazna are commodities from Turkistan, Song and Liao China:

Fine horses with gold trappings,  
 Turkic slaves (*ghulamān-i Turk*) with gold belts and quivers,  
 Falcons and hawks,  
 Sable, squirrel, ermine and fox furs,  
 Vessels made from leather skins,  
*Khutū* horns,  
 Rare cloth and Chinese brocade,  
 Chinese *dārkhāshāk*<sup>29</sup> and suchlike.<sup>30</sup>

The Qarakhanids traded indigenous products obtained from nomadic groups, as well as Chinese fabrics. Maḥmūd al-Kāshgharī listed some types of Chinese fabrics that circulated in the Qarakhanid realm: *juz* (Chinese blankets from red gilded brocade), *kaz*, *zunkum*, *qajaj*, *jūt* and *lukhtāy* (types of Chinese brocade), *shalāshū* (a type of Chinese cloth), *kanzī* (Chinese cloth in red, yellow and green colors), *jīnakhsī*, *takhjak* and *khuling* (Chinese silk).<sup>31</sup> Among the Qarakhanid gifts was also *khutū*, a highly prized commodity in the Islamic world. *Khutū* refers to walrus tusk and narwhal horn from the Khitan realm.

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of the Khmer Empire (9th–13th centuries) in Southeast Asia (present Cambodia). Cyril Glassé, ed., *The New Encyclopedia of Islam* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001), 47.

26 *Sandal-i maqāsirī* – tawny, fawn-colored white sandalwood was a medical treasure traded in the Islamic world. *Ṭabīblik kitābī*, ed. and trans. Károly, 312.

27 Barbary is a historical name for the region of North Africa extending from Egypt to the Atlantic Ocean.

28 *Zayn al-akhbār*, ed. Ḥabībī, 188–189.

29 It could be a combination of the words *dārū* (medicine, drug) and *khāshāk* (leaves, sprigs). The term could be used for some Chinese medicine as well as for Chinese tea. Also see the section on the Qinghai Road: Tea and Horse Trade in Chapter 6.

30 *Zayn al-akhbār*, ed. Ḥabībī, 189.

31 *Dīwān lughāt al-Turk*, trans. Auezova, 319–320, 397, 418, 442, 448, 451, 679, 829, 921, 1017.



It was used to make hilts for swords and knives and was valued for its supposed ability to indicate the presence of poison.<sup>32</sup> The word *khutū* first appeared in Islamic sources in the tenth century when the Khitans founded the Liao Empire in China, and was closely associated with the commodity imported from China and the land of the Turks.<sup>33</sup> Due to the steppe origin of the Khitans and their sinicized culture, they were considered Turkic by one group of Muslim authors<sup>34</sup> and Chinese according to another.<sup>35</sup> That explains the contradiction in the geographical origin of the *khutū* ivory provided in Islamic sources, and since this Khitan product was transported to the Islamic world via the Qarakhanids, the “Land of Turks” could also indicate the Qarakhanid realm. For instance, al-Bīrūnī provided the following description of *khutū* that he obtained from the Khitan envoy:

The emissary of Khitans [Qitāy] has stated that *khutū* is the forehead of bullock. People keep it with them, for, if it is brought close to a poison, it becomes wet. Some have said that it is a bone from the forehead of rhinoceros, which is “water elephant.” Yet others have suggested that such a bullock is indigenous to the region of Kirghiz. Some gone further and said that the animal is endemic to islands and its flesh is so profuse that it hangs down and is easily stripped off.<sup>36</sup>

At the same time, *Liao shi* gives another explanation of *khutū*, which is known as *guduoxi* (*guduo* horn) in Chinese:

楸犀千歲蛇角，又為篤訥犀。

*Guduoxi* is the horn of a thousand-year-old snake, it is also *dunexi*.<sup>37</sup>

32 *Dīwān lughāt al-Turk*, trans. Auezova, 905. The word *khutū* is written as *jutuq* (*chutuq*) in *Dīwān lughāt al-Turk*, which is the result of scribe's miscopying the correct *khutū*. Robert Dankoff, “A Note on *khutū* and *chatuq*,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 93, no. 4 (1973): 542–43.

33 For the usage of the word *khutū* and its association with the Khitans in Muslim sources, see Anya King, “Early Islamic Sources on the Kitan Liao: The Role of Trade,” *Journal of Song-Yuan Studies* 43 (2013): 253–271.

34 *Dhayl ta'rikh Dimashq*, ed. Amedroz, 275; *Al-Kāmil fī al-ta'rikh*, ed. Tornberg, vol. 9, 209–210, 355–356; *Al-Kāmil fī al-ta'rikh*, trans. Bulgakov and Kamoliddin, 183–184, 211–212; *Akhbār al-dawla al-Saljūkiyya*, trans. Bosworth, 47, 65.

35 *Jahānnāma*, ed. Borshtshevskii, 39; *Ṭabaqāt-i Nāširī*, trans. Raverty, vol. 2, 900.

36 *Kitāb al-ṣaydana fī al-ṭibb*, ed. and trans. Said, 141, for the Arabic text, see 174. I slightly modified the translation.

37 *Liao shi*, 116: 1549.

Here “a thousand-year-old snake” may refer to the narwhal. The Khitans probably applied this term to horns of different kinds of animals.

The Ghaznavids seem to have sought good relations with the Qarakhanids despite frequent territorial disputes and conflicts, through marriage alliances and organizing grand reception ceremonies for Qarakhanid ambassadors.<sup>38</sup> The Ghaznavids were keen to keep the peace with the Qarakhanids in order to maintain their access to the slave trade and commodities from China. It is probably from the Qarakhanids that Emperor Shengzong of Liao (982–1031) obtained information about the Ghaznavids in Khurasan and India, and decided to establish close relations with them, sending an envoy passing the Qarakhanid territory, which will be discussed in Chapter 5.

### 3 Gifting between the Qarakhanids and the Sinitic World: The Liao Case

The Qarakhanid territory was the closest Muslim state to China that was not directly involved in the rapidly developing global maritime trade. Therefore, they were interested in greater contact with China via overland passages to gain access to beautiful Chinese fabrics, porcelain, tea and other luxurious commodities. How distant and intensive was the Qarakhanid trade in China? According to Jürgen Paul, this question is one of the less-studied topics of international relations in the pre-Mongol period.<sup>39</sup> The Qarakhanids’ predecessors in Transoxiana, the Samanids, did not trade in remote territories of China and much less is known about their diplomatic relations. *Liao shi* recorded an envoy sent to the Liao court from Bosī (Persia) in 923.<sup>40</sup> Scholars assumed that the Samanids were able to send this envoy.<sup>41</sup> However, in order to get the Liao court, the Samanids had to pass through Qarakhanid territories. This seems unlikely due to the military confrontation between the Samanids and the Qarakhanid ruler of Kashghar Ughuljaq Qadir Khan in this period.<sup>42</sup>

The Bosī envoy would more likely have been sent from the Qarakhanid trade city Artuj, which was governed according to al-Qarshī by one of the Samanid princes, who fled the Samanid realm due to the struggle among the members of the dynasty and was hosted by the Qarakhanid ruler Ughuljaq Qadir Khan.

38 *Kitāb al-Yamīnī*, trans. Reynolds, 373–375; *Zayn al-akhbār*, ed. Ḥabībī, 188–189.

39 Paul, *Zentralasien*, 175.

40 *Liao shi*, 2: 20.

41 Allsen, *Culture and Conquest*, 9; Hansen, “International Gifting,” 288; Biran, “Unearthing the Liao Dynasty’s Relations,” 229.

42 Pritsak, “Die Karachaniden,” 24–25; Golden, “The Karakhanids and Early Islam,” 357.

He granted the Samanid prince some land, materials to build a mosque and trading rights in the region.<sup>43</sup> This Samanid dynastic member, who was probably interested in trade with China, could send the envoy to the Liao.

The same doubt applies to the journey of the Arab traveler Abū Dulaf to “China” in 941–943, who accompanied the ambassador of Qalin b. al-Shakhir “the King of China,” sent to the Samanid court of Nasr ibn Ahmad (d. 943).<sup>44</sup> Abū Dulaf claims that he traveled from the Samanid capital Bukhara to the capital of “China” Sandabil. Sandabil was identified as the capital of the Ganzhou Uyghurs in the present Gansu Province of China.<sup>45</sup> The reason for this travel was a possible marriage alliance between the two courts. “The King of China” requested a Samanid princess. However, Nasr ibn Ahmad refused this request on the grounds of religion, since Islam does not permit women to marry nonbelievers. Instead, he suggested a marriage between one of his sons and a “Chinese” princess.<sup>46</sup> Abū Dulaf left two *Risālas* on his travels. His first *Risāla*, which recounted the journey to the land of Turks, China, and India, consists of series of fanciful descriptions and unidentified geographical places. For this reason, scholars assumed that Abū Dulaf never traveled to Ganzhou and obtained his information from other sources of that period.<sup>47</sup> The embassy from “the King of China” itself could be also apocryphal.<sup>48</sup> Therefore, two extant accounts on possible relations of the Samanids with the Sinitic world, or at least with the Uyghurs, are considered to be unreliable and need further study.

The Qarakhanid position in the Sinitic world is unique. Chinese sources have information on envoys from the Turks, Khotan and the Islamic world coming via the overland roads to the courts of the Later Tang, the Later Jin, the Liao,

43 *Mulhaqāt al-ṣurāh*, trans. Vohidov and Aminov, 102.

44 *Risāla* /Abū Dulaf, trans. von Rohr-Sauer, 17.

45 Joseph Marquart, *Osteuropäische und Ostasiatische Streifzüge: Ethnologische und Historisch-topographische Studien zur Geschichte des 9. und 10. Jahrhunderts (ca. 840–940)* (Leipzig: Dieterich, 1903, rpt. Hildesheim: Olms, 1961), 84–90.

46 *Risāla* /Abū Dulaf, trans. von Rohr-Sauer, 17.

47 *Risāla* /Abū Dulaf, trans. von Rohr-Sauer, 74–83; also see Richard W. Bulliet, “Abu Dolaf Al-Yanbui,” *Encyclopædia Iranica*, ed. Ehsan Yarshater (New York: Encyclopædia Iranica Foundation, 1983), I/3, 271–72; Pavel Kozhin, *Kitai i Tsentral’naia Aziia do epokhi Chingizkhana: problemy paleokul’turologii* (Moscow: Forum, 2011), 310–311.

48 For an alleged embassy from “the Emperor of China” to the Samanid court in 939, see Clifford E. Bosworth, “An Alleged Embassy from the Emperor of China to the Amir Naṣr ibn Aḥmad: A Contribution to Sāmānid Military History,” in *Yād-nāma-yi Irāni-yi Mīnorsky*, ed. Mujtaba Minuvi, and Iraj Afshar (Tehran: Tehran University, 1969), 17–29, rpr. in Clifford E. Bosworth, *The Medieval History of Iran, Afghanistan and Central Asia* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1977), xxii, 1–13.

the Northern Song, and the Jin. The Qarakhanids probably dispatched most of these missions. But concerning the Jin period, it is not clear, because the term *Dashi* could apply both to the Qara Khitai and the Qarakhanids in Jin sources. It applies to Southern Song sources as well. In this period, the Qarakhanids became subjects of the Qara Khitai, who had a confrontation with the Jin.<sup>49</sup> This explains the lack of information on the Qarakhanids in *Jin shi*. However, in this period, they continued to obtain Chinese goods from the Uyghurs. The Qarakhanids as well as the Uyghur Idiquts of Turfan were subjects of the Qara Khitai and Qarakhanid merchants could easily trade at least until Turfan, and obtain Chinese goods from the Uyghurs. In this period, the Tanguts, who were frequently at war with the Liao Empire, strengthened their position and played a key role in the trade between China and Central Asia. It seems that after the collapse of the Liao Empire, the Qarakhanids lost their access to direct trade with China. At the same time, there were most likely some trade networks that continued to function at least occasionally, depending on relations between the Qara Khitai and the Jurchens. This assumption may be confirmed by Jin coins unearthed in 2013 from the Burana site (ancient Balasagun) dated 1161–1190, and even a coin minted in Sri Lanka in 1200–1202 that was discovered in Talas in 2016.<sup>50</sup>

The Liao dynasty became the main trade partner of the Qarakhanids in the Sinitic world. Qarakhanid merchants supplied rarities from the Islamic world, and Khitan trade caravans transported Chinese commodities to Turkistan. The presence of merchants from the Khitan realm in the Qarakhanid territory recorded in *Qutadghu bilig*:

Black earth wrapped a veil of green silk over her face, Khitāy [Khitan] caravan spread out its Tawghāj [Chinese] ware.<sup>51</sup>

The Qarakhanids rulers most likely organized trade caravans to Liao China themselves. This practice can be observed in their activities in Song China. The Liao emperors were also interested in contacts with the Turkic world and even

49 For the alliance between the Qara Khitai and the Song dynasty against the Jin, see *Jin shi*, 31: 1114; for the alliance between the Qara Khitai and the Tanguts against the Jin, see *Jin shi*, 74: 1698; for the execution of the Jin ambassador by the Qara Khitai ruler, see *Jin shi*, 121: 2636–2638.

50 Aleksandr Kamyshev, “Monety na velikom shelkovom puti (Kyrgyzstan),” *Arkeologiya Evraziiskikh stepei* 6 (2017): 12.

51 *Qutadghu bilig*, trans. Dankoff, 41. For the Turkic text, see *Qutadghu bilig*, ed. and trans. Arat, vol 1, 24.

more than its contemporaries Song, Jin and Xi Xia.<sup>52</sup> The Khitans established diplomatic contacts with the Qarakhanids, which had been strengthened by marriage alliances.<sup>53</sup> Moreover, they sought to arrange relations with more remote Turko-Muslim states and sent a mission to Ghazna.<sup>54</sup>

Islamic sources provide general information on Sino-Turkic relations in the pre-Mongol period without indicating any details.

People of al-Ṣīn do not mix with the Turks and they differ from them in most things ... But people of Qitāy and Yughur mix with the Turks and have relations with them. They have relations and correspondence with the kings of Transoxiana, whereas the people of al-Ṣīn are different and do not allow strangers to enter their country and stay among them.<sup>55</sup>

This passage from the Marwazī's account on China gives a general view of Sino-Turkic relations in the eleventh century. The author divided China into three parts al-Ṣīn – Song China, Qitāy – Liao China and Yughur – the Uyghur realm.<sup>56</sup> He indicates close relations of the Khitans with the Qarakhanids (kings of Transoxiana) and demonstrates its position in the Liao and Song realms. While the Liao Empire established diplomatic relations with the Qarakhanids, the Song Empire applied traditional Chinese foreign policy, when China and its neighbors had been divided into two worlds: the “civilized” center, and the uncivilized world of “barbarians” that surrounded it. Chinese sources support this statement, adding more details on the Qarakhanid envoys sent to Liao and Song China. Moreover, these sources include an interesting list of commodities coming from the Qarakhanid realm to China that cannot be obtained from Islamic sources.

One of the main difficulties of Chinese sources is determining what the Qarakhanids were called in Chinese. Central Asia and its peoples had been known to China since Zhang Qian (d. 113), the first official diplomat of Emperor Wu of Han (r. 141–87 BCE), who traveled to Central Asia and brought back reliable information about the Western Regions to the Chinese imperial court. Since then, the Chinese used different names for Central Asian peoples and

52 Huang Shijian 黄时鉴, “Liao yu ‘Dashi’ 辽与‘大食’ [Liao and Dashi],” in *Huang Shijian Wenji* 黄时鉴文集 [Selected Works of Huang Shijian], ed. Huang Shijian (Beijing: Zhongxi Shuju, 2011), vol. 2, 16.

53 See the Table 1 of this Chapter.

54 *Ṭabāʾī al-ḥayawān*, ed. and trans. Minorsky, 15, 19–21; *Liao shi*, 16: 188–189.

55 *Ṭabāʾī al-ḥayawān*, ed. and trans. Minorsky, 15. I slightly changed the translation by Minorsky; for the Arabic text, see \*3.

56 *Ibid.*, 14.

countries, which can be generally divided into autonyms, the names by which a people identified themselves; and exonyms, the names the Chinese gave to foreigners. General exonyms used by Chinese for foreigners could often have negative connotations such as *rong*, *hu*, or *fan*, generally translated as “barbarians” or “foreigners,” as well as more neutral names, such as Xiyu (Western Regions) and *waiguo* (outside country). Some names could also be used for peoples other than those to whom it had been applied before. For instance, the term Fulin, which applied to Byzantium during the Tang period, was used for the Saljuqs of Rum (1081–1308) in Song China.<sup>57</sup> The founders of the Qarakhanid dynasty were Turkic people who were known in China by the autonym Tujue (Turks) and was used during the Sui-Tang period for the nomadic peoples who in the sixth century founded an empire stretching from present Mongolia to the Black Sea.<sup>58</sup> Chinese sources use two names for the Qarakhanid territories: Dashi and Yutian, and refer to the Khagans as *heihan*.<sup>59</sup>

The term Dashi first appeared during the Tang dynasty and was used to refer to the ‘Abbasid Caliphate, which is often translated into western languages as “the Arabs” and “Arabia.” The first Chinese account, which uses the term Dashi, and is considered to be the earliest description of the Islamic world in China, dates to the mid-eighth century. It was written by the official and scholar Du You (735–812) in his *Tong dian* (*Encyclopedic History of Institutions*). He had never visited the Islamic world, which was ruled by the ‘Abbasids at the time. He obtained information from his relative Du Huan, a Chinese soldier captured by the Muslims at the battle of Talas in 751 and taken to the capital of the ‘Abbasid Caliphate. Du Huan was held as a prisoner of war in Kufa for ten years, after which he returned to China and described life in the early Islamic

57 For the term Fulin, see Friedrich Hirth, “The Mystery of Fu-lin,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 30, no. 1 (1909): 1–31. Also see Xu Jialing 徐家玲, “Baizhanting haishi Saierzhuoren guojia? Xi Song shi, ‘Fulin guo chuan’ de yi duan jizai 拜占庭还是塞立柱人国家? 析《宋史·拂棘国传》的一段记载 [Byzantium or Saljuq Sultanate? On a piece of Narrative on “Fulin” in History of Song Dynasty],” *Gudai wenming* 古代文明 3, no. 4 (2009): 63–67. I discussed Chinese accounts on the Saljuqs in Chapter 5.

58 For the chronology of the usage of Tujue in Chinese sources, see Liu Mau-Tsai, *Die Chinesischen Nachrichten zur Geschichte der Ost-Türken (T'u-küe)* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1958), vol. 1, 1. For the German translation of the Tujue section in *Xin Wudai shi*, see Liu, *Die Chinesischen Nachrichten*, vol. 1, 390. For other possible origins of the term Tujue, see Peter B. Golden, “Ethnogenesis in the Tribal Zone: The Shaping of the Türks,” in *Peter B. Golden: Studies on the Peoples and Cultures of the Eurasian Steppes*, ed. Cătălin Hriban (Bucharest-Brăila: Romanian Academy and Brăila Museum), 2011, 20–21.

59 For the name of the Qarakhanids in Liao and Song sources, see Huang, “Liao yu ‘Dashi,’” 16–30; Jiang Qixiang 蔣其祥, “Heihan chao ming cheng kao 黑汗朝名称考 [Study on the name of the Heihan dynasty],” *Xiyu yanjiu* 西域研究 1 (2001): 51–6.

society. Du You used his recollections in writing his description of Dashi that appeared in the chapter of Xirong “Western Barbarians.”<sup>60</sup>

The Chinese name for Muslims, Dashi, was derived from the Persian word Tazi (Tajik), which was used by the Sassanids (224–651) for Arabs and originated from the Arabian tribe name Ṭayy. The Sassanids’ first frequent contacts with the Arabic world happened via representatives of this group and during the early Islamic period in Iran and Central Asia, its name came to be applied in a general way by the locals to Arabs, and later to all Muslims.<sup>61</sup> Therefore, the Chinese term Dashi does not refer specifically to Arabs or Arabia but to Islam and the Islamic world as a whole, including the Arabian conquests. It matters specifically when, after the ninth century, the ‘Abbasid Caliphate started to lose its former conquered territories and new Muslim states, headed by local dynasties, began to appear. Liao and Song sources continued to use the term Dashi, referring to these non-Arabic Muslim states, which were also independent from the ‘Abbasid Caliphate. Zhao Rugua (1170–1228), a Song official who served as *shiboshi*, a Supervisor of Maritime Trade in Quanzhou and wrote a two-volume book on foreign countries and trade, recorded twenty-four states of Dashi, including Bukhara (Puhualuo), Khwarazm (Luoshimei) and Ghazna (Jicini).<sup>62</sup> The author also devoted an entire chapter to the Ghaznavids. Zhao Rugua never visited the countries that he described in his book. He obtained all his information from merchants who traveled to China by maritime routes. He provided very detailed information on the Ghaznavids, including geographical location, climate, people and commodities imported from their realm. It seems that the author had an opportunity to meet merchants from the former Ghaznavid realm in China, which explains the details on Ghazna in his book. It also serves as evidence that the Ghaznavids were involved in maritime trade with China.

60 *Tong dian*, 193: 5278–5281; for the study of this chapter, see Li Jinxu 李锦 and Yu Taishan 余太山, “*Tong dian*” *xiyu wenxian yaozhu* 《通典》西域文献要注 [Notes on the Chapter of the Western Regions in “*Tong dian*”] (Beijing: Shanghai renmin, 2009); for the English translation, see Alexander Akin, “The Jing Xing ji of Du Huan: Notes on the West by a Chinese Prisoner of War,” *Harvard Middle Eastern and Islamic Review* 5 (1999–2000): 77–102; for the further discussion on the Arabs in Chinese sources, also see Lin Ying, and Yu Yusen, “The Arab Empire in Chinese Sources from the 8th Century to the 10th Century,” in *Arabia, Greece and Byzantium: Cultural Contacts in Ancient and Medieval Times*, ed. Abdulaziz Al-Helabi, Dimitrios G. Letsios, Moshalleh Al-Moraekhi, and Abdullah Al-Abduljabbar (Riyadh: King Saud University, 2012), 311–320.

61 Hyunhee Park, *Mapping the Chinese and Islamic Worlds: Cross-Cultural Exchange in Pre-Modern Asia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 203. Later this term was refined and limited to the Persian element and came to refer to the Iranian-speaking population in Central Asia. Biran, “Unearthing the Liao Dynasty’s Relations,” 223.

62 *Zhu fan zhi*, trans. Hirth and Rockhill, 116–117.

The official history of the Song dynasty *Song shi*, also provided an explanation of the term Dashi:

其國部屬各異名，故有勿巡，有陁婆離，有俞盧和地，有麻囉跋等國，然皆冠以大食。<sup>63</sup>

The subordinates of this state [Dashi] have different names, therefore, there are Wuxun [Mazun],<sup>64</sup> Tuopoli [Tabriz],<sup>65</sup> Yuluhedi [al-Khatt],<sup>66</sup> Maluoba [Mirbat]<sup>67</sup> and other states, however, they are all called as Dashi.

The official history of the Liao dynasty *Liao shi* recorded three envoys from the Dashi state. The first envoy was sent to the court of Emperor Taizu of Liao (907–926) in 924, and the other two envoys during the reign of Emperor Shengzong in 1020 and 1021.

63 *Song shi*, 490: 14121.

64 Wuxun is identified with Mazun, which was the name of the Sassanid province in Eastern Arabia, including northern Oman. After the Arab conquest the name was used mainly for the port city Sohar, see Fujita Toyohachi, *Zhongguo Nanhai*, 220; Chen Jiarong 陈佳荣, Xie Fang 谢方 and Lu Junling 陆峻岭, *Gudai Nanhai diming huishi* 古代南海地名汇释 [Assembled explanations of ancient place-names of the Southern Sea] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1986), 11, 999. Chaffee has recently located Wuxun in Muscat, which is south of Sohar. John W. Chaffee, *The Muslim Merchants of Premodern China: The History of a Maritime Asian Trade Diaspora, 750–1400* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 68, 95.

65 For the identification of Tuopoli (also recorded as Tuopolic) with Tabriz, see Chen et al., *Gudai Nanhai diming huishi*, 11, 1053. Tabriz is a city in Iranian Azerbaijan, which was the center of the Islamic Rawadid dynasty (981–1054). In 1054 Tabriz had been conquered by Tughril (1037–1063) and included in the Great Saljuq Empire. Clifford E. Bosworth, “The Political and Dynastic History of the Iranian World (A.D. 1000–1217),” in *The Cambridge History of Iran: The Saljuq and Mongol Period*, ed. John A. Boyle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), vol. 5, 32, 44.

66 Al-Khatt is present-day al-Qatif, located in Eastern Saudi Arabia. It functioned for many centuries as one of the important trade ports in the Arab states of the Persian Gulf. During the Song dynasty it was the capital of the Uyunids (1071–1253), which took the power in the region with the military assistance of the Great Saljuq Empire. Clifford E. Bosworth, *The New Islamic Dynasties: A Chronological and Genealogical Manual* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University, 1996), 94–95. For the identification of Yuluhedi with al-Qatif, see Chen et al., *Gudai Nanhai diming huishi*, 11, 898.

67 Mirbat, located in present-day Oman, had been one of the important trade centers since the tenth century. It was famous in Song China for its frankincense (*ruxiang*). *Zhu fan zhi*, trans. Hirth and Rockhill, 195; Schottenhammer, “Transfer of Xiangyao,” 130.



TABLE 1 Qarakhanid missions to the Liao court

	Name and date	Gifts	Loans	Purpose
1.	Dashi October 28, 924 ( <i>LS</i> 2: 20)	unspecified	unspecified	tribute
2.	Khotan February 22, 1015 ( <i>LS</i> 15: 176)	unspecified	unspecified	tribute
3.	Dashi November 12, 1020 ( <i>LS</i> 16: 189)	ivory, local products	unspecified	marriage alliance
4.	Dashi May, 1021 ( <i>LS</i> 16: 189)	unspecified	unspecified	marriage alliance

It is not clear which Muslim state sent the first envoy to the Liao court in the autumn of 924. Scholars generally assume that this envoy could have hailed from the ‘Abbasids of Baghdad or the Samanids, who ruled in Transoxiana and Khurasan, the former eastern territories of the ‘Abbasid Caliphate.<sup>68</sup> What if the Qarakhanids sent this envoy? As it has been discussed above, Islamic sources recorded mass conversion among the Turks in the mid-tenth century<sup>69</sup> during the rule or shortly after the death of the Qarakhanid ruler Satuq Bughra Khan, who was mentioned as “the first Turkic Khaqan converted to Islam in Kashghar and Ferghana” by al-Qarshī.<sup>70</sup> However, the conditions of conversion and the exact date are not clear. These mass conversions can be a culminating point of the Islamization process in the Turkic lands, which had started much earlier.<sup>71</sup>

68 Allsen, *Culture and Conquest*, 9; Hansen, “International Gifting,” 288; Biran, “Unearthing the Liao Dynasty’s Relations,” 229.

69 *Al-Kāmil fī al-tārīkh*, ed. Tornberg, vol. 8, 396; *Al-Kāmil fī al-tārīkh*, trans. Bulgakov and Kamoliddin, 138. For the Islamization of the Qarakhanids, also see Bartold, *Turkestan*, 315–317; Golden, “The Karakhanids and Early Islam,” 343–370; Hua Tao, “Central and Western Tianshan on the Eve of Islamization,” *Journal of Asian History* 27, no. 2 (1993): 95–108; Deborah G. Tor, “The Islamization of Central Asia in the Sāmānid Era and Reshaping of the Muslim World,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 72, no. 2 (2009): 279–99.

70 *Mulhaqāt al-ṣurāh*, trans. Vohidov and Aminov, 101.

71 Michal Biran assumes that migration of the remaining Turkic population in Mongolia forced by the Liao expansion brought the Turks deeper into the Islamic world and

For instance, Abū Dulaf mentioned Turkic tribes, Khargah and Baghraj, which had been already converted to Islam by 941.<sup>72</sup> Khargah was identified with the Qarakhanid region Kashghar and Baghraj with the people of the Qarakhanid Satuq Bughra Khan.<sup>73</sup> Satuq Bughra Khan was based in Balasaghun, while his uncle Ughuljaq Qadir Khan was a co-Khagan in Kashghar.<sup>74</sup> Ughuljaq Qadir Khan hosted the Samanid prince in his realm, which might have facilitated Muslim settlement in the region as well as the conversion process.<sup>75</sup> However, the Islamization of the region started even earlier. According to the lost eleventh-century source *Tārikh-i Kāshgār* some parts of which had been cited in a later work by al-Qarshī, the first Turks who converted to Islam were “people of Shash” and it happened during the reign of Satuq Bughra Khan’s grandfather.<sup>76</sup> From the end of the ninth century, the Qarakhanids’ Islamic neighbors, the Samanids, had been very active militarily in the steppe cities.<sup>77</sup> However, the proximity to flourishing Islamic cultural and trade centers in the Turkic world played a more significant role in the Islamization of this region than the victories of the Samanid army. Peter Golden believes that Islam came to the region peacefully through Muslim merchants, dwellers and settlers.<sup>78</sup> When one of the Muslim states in the Western Regions sent a mission to China in 924, the influence of Islam among the Qarakhanids was already very strong. Chinese-style coins with Arabic inscriptions in Zhetysu, which have been discussed above, also demonstrate the Islamization among the Turkic ruling elites in the steppe region by the tenth century. Moreover, an Arab traveler and a member of an embassy of the ‘Abbasid Caliph of Baghdad to the king of the Volga Bulgars, who passed through the land of the Turks in 922, recorded the Islamization process among the Oghuz Turks, the western neighbors of the Qarakhanids.<sup>79</sup> The official history of the Five Dynasties, *Xin wudai shi* compiled by Song officials, recorded three envoys to the court of the Later Tang in

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probably contributed to the mass conversion in the mid-tenth century. Biran, “Unearthing the Liao Dynasty’s Relations,” 226.

72 *Risāla* / Abū Dulaf, trans. von Rohr-Sauer, 18–21.

73 Marquart, *Osteuropäische und Ostasiatische Streifzüge*, 75–77; *Risāla* / Abū Dulaf, trans. von Rohr-Sauer, 49, n. 281.

74 The early Qarakhanids divided their realm into eastern and western parts. The eastern part, with the capital in Balasaghun, was ruled by the main Khagan; the western part was first centered in Talas and later in Kashghar by the co-Khagan. Pritsak, “Die Karachaniden,” 23–24.

75 *Mulhaqāt al-ṣurāh*, trans. Vohidov and Aminov, 102.

76 *Ibid*, 101.

77 *Murūj al-dhahab wa ma‘ādin al-jawhar*, ed. and trans. de Meynard, vol 8, 144–145.

78 Golden, “The Karakhanids and Early Islam,” 353.

79 *Risāla* / Ibn Fadlān, trans. Lunde and Stone, 16–17.

925, 927, 931 and one envoy to the court of the Later Jin in 941 from the Turks, “that sent no envoy afterward.”<sup>80</sup> The first envoy from the Turks to the court of the Later Tang could be the same envoy from Dashi that came to the Liao court in the late autumn of 924 and then passed further. Therefore, the envoy that arrived at the Liao court in 924 was most likely sent by the Qarakhanids.<sup>81</sup>

*Liao shi* recorded that on September 11, 1006, the Shazhou Uyghurs offered jade and horses from Dashi to the Liao emperor.<sup>82</sup> There were most likely the Qarakhanid horses and jade from Khotan, which had been recently conquered by the Qarakhanids. Khotan played a significant role in the Qarakhanid-Chinese relations, serving as a departure point for envoys sent to Liao and Song China. *Song shi* recorded frequent envoys sent by *heihan* of Khotan to the Northern Song after the Qarakhanid conquest.<sup>83</sup> Therefore, it can be concluded that the Khotan envoy to the Liao court in 1015 was sent by the Qarakhanids.<sup>84</sup>

The last two envoys in the table from the Dashi state in 1020 and 1021 to the Liao court were most likely also sent by the Qarakhanids. Marwazī recorded a marriage between a Liao noblewoman and the Qarakhanid prince Chaghri Tegin.<sup>85</sup> Huang Shijian claimed that Cege and Chaghri Tegin (who was from the ruling elite of the Qarakhanids), mentioned in the Chinese and Islamic sources are the same person.<sup>86</sup>

During this period, the Qarakhanid ruler ‘Ali ibn Hasan (1020–1034), also known as ‘Ali Tegin residing in Samarqand, became a powerful and influential figure in Central Asia.<sup>87</sup> However, this caused a conflict with his brother Yusuf Qadir Khan, who had controlled the Kashghar and Khotan territories, regularly minting coins with his name and the title *Malik al-Mashriq* and sought to become a leader of the Qarakhanids.<sup>88</sup> It seems that Yusuf Qadir Khan sent an

80 *Xin wudai shi*, 74: 913.

81 Hua Tao assumed that very little materials would prove the Qarakhanid origin of these missions and they could be dispatched by other Turkic groups resided around the Hexi region. Hua Tao, “Satuq Bughra Khan and the Beginning of Islamization in the Tian Shan Region,” in *Islam*, ed. Jin Yijiu, trans. Chan Ching-shing Alex (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 126.

82 *Liao shi*, 14: 162.

83 *Song shi*, 490: 14106–14109. These envoys will be discussed in Chapter 3.

84 *Liao shi*, 15: 176; also see Biran, “Unearthing the Liao Dynasty’s Relations,” 230–231.

85 *Ṭabāʾī al-ḥayawān*, ed. and trans. Minorsky, 19–20.

86 Huang, “Liao yu ‘Dashi,” 23–24. For the origin of this delegation, also see Wittfogel and Feng, *History of Chinese Society*, 317–318; Biran, “Unearthing the Liao Dynasty’s Relations,” 232.

87 Clifford E. Bosworth, “Alitigin,” *Encyclopædia Iranica*, ed. Ehsan Yarshater (New York: Encyclopædia Iranica Foundation, 1985), 1/8, 887–88; Kochnev, *Numizmaticheskaia istoriia*, 135.

88 Davidovich, “The Karakhanids,” 130, 132.

envoy to the Liao emperor in order to strengthen his status and prestige in the region, as he allied himself with Sultan Mahmud of Ghazna in 1025. Yusuf Qadir Khan achieved his ambitions after the Sultan Mahmud's routes. 'Ali Tegin even abandoned Samarqand and Bukhara.<sup>89</sup> This political situation opened a road for the Liao ambassador to Ghazna. Yusuf Qadir Khan, who had alliances with Emperor Shengzong of Liao and Sultan Mahmud of Ghazna, allowed safe passage through his territories. The ambassador was sent in 1024 and reached the court together with the envoy from the Uyghurs (Yughur Khan) in either 1026 or 1027. Chinese sources did not record this embassy, possibly because Sultan Mahmud of Ghazna rejected a request from the Liao Emperor and was not interested in establishing diplomatic relations with the Khitans due to differing religious beliefs.<sup>90</sup> A list of gifts sent by the Liao Emperor also gives general information on what could be imported from Liao China to the Turko-Islamic world:

2 suits of *khwīth*,  
 1 suit of *zhūnkī*,  
 1 suit of *kanzī*,  
 2 suits of *shakardi*, each of 2 pieces,  
 15 suits of raw silk, each of 2 pieces,  
 Furs of sable-marten for pelisses,  
 200 sable martens,  
 1000 grey squirrels,  
 30 vesicles of musk,  
 1 bow with 10 arrows.<sup>91</sup>

This list demonstrates that the Khitans were aware of what was valued in the Islamic world, bringing a variety of Chinese fabrics and highly prized musk and fur produced by nomads. In the list of the Qarakhanid gifts to the Ghaznavids, we can observe identical commodities,<sup>92</sup> which demonstrates that the Qarakhanids could obtain similar products from the Liao realm. *Liao shi* does not mention what was presented in return to the Qarakhanid ambassadors who visited the Liao court. However, Ye Longli, the author of the

89 Ibid, 133.

90 *Zayn al-akhbār*, ed. Ḥabībī, 191; *Ṭabā'ī al-ḥayawān*, ed. and trans. Minorsky, 21.

91 *Ṭabā'ī al-ḥayawān*, ed. and trans. Minorsky, 20, for the Arabic text, see \*8. The last gift seems to be symbolic, which had been presented by the diplomatic protocol of Liao to foreign ambassadors. For more details about these envoys, see King, "Early Islamic Sources," 255–258.

92 *Kitāb al-Yamīnī*, trans. Reynolds, 317; *Zayn al-akhbār*, ed. Ḥabībī, 189.

unofficial history of the Liao dynasty *Qidan guo zhi*, compiled in the Southern Song, reports that the Qarakhanids (Dashi and Yutian) – together with other “small countries” as Turfan (Gaochang), Kucha (Qiuci, later also under the Qarakhanids), Qomul (Xiaoshi), Ganzhou, Dunhuang, and Liangzhou – sent delegations of 400 people every three years and, as a rule, received a payment in the amount of no less than 400,000 strings of coins (*guan*) for their gifts. Ye Longji also listed gifts presented by these states:

玉 珠 犀 乳香 琥珀 瑪瑙器 寶鐵兵器 斜合黑皮 褐黑絲  
門得絲 怕里呵 礪砂 褐里絲 已上皆細毛織成，以二丈為匹。<sup>93</sup>

Jade, pearls, rhino horn, frankincense, amber, agate vessels, wrought iron weapons, *xiehe*<sup>94</sup> black hides, *heheisi*, *mendeisi*, *palihe*, ammonium chloride, *helisi*, the above all are fine wool silk fabric, each bolt of two *zhang*.

The commodities in the list are mostly identical to Qarakhanid gifts presented to the Song emperors.<sup>95</sup> Moreover, some items could be transported mainly by the Qarakhanids to Liao China, such as jade, pearls, ammonium chloride, frankincense, and amber. For instance, jade is a famous product of Khotan, and had been imported to China since ancient times. It was also prized at the court of the sinicized Khitans. The Khotanese jade trade was continued by the Qarakhanids. Pearls were imported from Iran and India and arrived in China via the Qarakhanids. Zhao Rugua recorded that the best pearls came to China from the Islamic countries.<sup>96</sup> Another typical Silk Road good transported from Central Asia to China was ammonium, used in metallurgy and textile dying.<sup>97</sup> Frankincense was a common commodity transported by the Qarakhanids to Song China and was mentioned as a local product of the Qarakhanids.<sup>98</sup> Amber is also the most common imported commodity found in Liao-period tombs. For instance, amber items found from the Liao tomb of Princess of Chen and her husband were made of amber from the Baltic region.<sup>99</sup> Northern Song sources recorded the Qarakhanids as one of the main suppliers of amber

93 *Qidan guo zhi*, 21: 205.

94 *Xiehe* is probably a Chinese transliteration of a Turkic word that refers to an animal.

95 For Qarakhanid gifts and commodities in Song China, see Chapter 3 and Appendices.

96 *Zhu fan zhi*, trans. Hirth and Rockhill, 229.

97 Valerie Hansen, *The Silk Road: A New History* (New York: Oxford University, 2012), 5, 122.

98 For the Qarakhanid frankincense trade, see Chapter 6.

99 Shen Hsueh-man, ed., *Schätze der Liao: Chinas vergessene Nomadendynastie*, 907–1125 (Zürich: Museum Rietberg, 2006), 110–111, 152–153, 166–173, 182–183, 186–187.

in China.<sup>100</sup> Amber was not local to Central Asia and was transported via Khwarazm and Volga Bulgharia from the Baltic region. For instance, a tenth-century Arab geographer and traveler al-Muqaddasī described a rich list of items transported from Volga Bulgharia to Khwarazm, including amber:

Sables, squirrels, ermines, fennecs, martens, foxes, beaver hides, colorful rabbits, goat hides, wax, arrows, wood bats, caps (*qalānis*), fish glue, fish teeth,<sup>101</sup> castoreum, amber, rawhides (*kaimukht*), honey, hazelnuts, falcons, swords, armor, birch wood (*khalanj*), Slavonic slaves (*al-raḡīq min al-Ṣaqāliba*), sheep and cattle – all these are from Bulghar.<sup>102</sup>

Central Asian sources also recorded a high demand for the Baltic amber in China.<sup>103</sup> It should be noted that trade networks between Northern Europe and Central Asia had been developed before the Qarakhanids. For instance, a large portion of Islamic coinage unearthed in Northern Europe belonged to the Samanids.<sup>104</sup> The usage of the Samanid coins in Europe was also confirmed by written sources. Ibrāhīm ibn Ya‘qūb al-Ṭurṭūshī (fl. 961–962), a Sephardic Jewish merchant from Muslim-ruled Spain who traveled through Europe in 965, mentioned the circulation of Samanid dirhams struck in Samarqand in the years 914 and 915 in the German region, namely in Maghānja (Mainz) on the river Rīn (Rhine).<sup>105</sup> Furs and slaves were the main commodities from the North exported for dirhams and other luxurious items from the Islamic world, India, and China. Jürgen Paul claims that this flourishing trade road, which

100 I will discuss the Qarakhanid amber trade in China in Chapter 6.

101 “Fish teeth” is more accurately translated as “walrus tusks.”

102 *Kitāb aḥsān al-taqāsīm fī ma‘rifat al-aqālīm*, ed. Goeje, 324–325. Also see the English translation, *Kitāb aḥsān al-taqāsīm fī ma‘rifat al-aqālīm*, trans. Collins, 286.

103 *Ṭabā‘ī al-ḥayawān*, ed. and trans. Minorsky, 16–17.

104 For the trade between the Samanids and the Vikings, see Michael Mitchiner, “Evidence for Viking-Islamic Trade Provided by Samanid Silver Coinage,” *East and West* 37, no. 1/4 (1987): 139–50; Melanie Michailidis, “Samanid Silver and Trade along the Fur Route,” in *Mechanisms of Exchange: Transmission in Medieval Art and Architecture of the Mediterranean, ca 1000–1500*, ed. Heather E. Grossman, and Alicia Walker (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 17–40.

105 Georg Jacob, *Arabische Berichte von Gesandten an germanische Fürstenhöfe aus dem 9. und 10. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1927), 31. By the end of the Samanid period, dirham circulation in Europe declined, mainly due to the silver crisis in that period. Written sources recorded that in Khwarazm, the dirham was converted into four separate parts in order to prevent merchants from taking it away, and any silver that was brought to the region was not allowed out. *Kitāb aḥsān al-taqāsīm fī ma‘rifat al-aqālīm*, trans. Collins, 235.

mainly functioned in the north-south direction and is known as the Fur Road, was much wider-reaching than the Silk Road.<sup>106</sup>

#### 4 Conclusion

The Qarakhanids' predecessors in inland international trade, the Sogdians and the Samanids, played a significant role in connecting different parts of the world: the Sogdians mainly served as middlemen between China and West Asia and the Samanids between Europe and the Islamic world. The Qarakhanid lists of commodities recorded in Central Asian and Chinese sources prove that Qarakhanid merchants managed to trade in different directions between the Silk and Fur Roads.

How far-flung was the Qarakhanid trade? Valerie Hansen claims that the most distant place from which the Khitans imported goods could be the Viking world. She poses the question: What if the Vikings brought different commodities that were highly prized in the Islamic world and China, such as walrus tusks, via the trade routes they used to transport amber?<sup>107</sup> Khitan contact with the Islamic world was managed by the Qarakhanids. Primary sources demonstrate how amber reached China from the Vikings' world, transported first to Volga Bulgaria and Khwarazm and further via the Qarakhanids to Liao China. Among the goods coming from Khwarazm, Islamic sources listed "fish teeth," which refers to walrus tusks, which could have been imported from Scandinavia to Khwarazm and further via the Qarakhanids to China. The Vikings shipped various goods, including walrus tusks, not only from Northern Europe but also from the Americas, which by the eleventh century could theoretically also have reached China both via maritime and continental routes.<sup>108</sup> The Vikings had their own interest in trade with Central Asia. They imported silver during the Samanids and later Central Asian fine fabrics during the Qarakhanids. The movement of goods and commodities across such distant territories demonstrates how the trade along the Silk and Fur Roads flourished during the tenth to the twelfth centuries, and how the Qarakhanids were located at the center of these global networks.

106 Paul, *Zentralasien*, 175.

107 Hansen, "International Gifting," 302.

108 For this international network and the start of globalization in the eleventh century, see Valerie Hansen, *The Year 1000: When Explorers Connected the World and Globalization Began* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2020).