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## The First Chinese Travel Record on the Arab World Commercial and Diplomatic Communications during the Islamic Golden Age

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Research Fellow

King Faisal Center For Research and Islamic Studies



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## **Chapter 1**

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## **The First Chinese Travel Record on the Arab World** ►

### **I. Du Huan, the First Chinese Traveler to Arab Countries**

Du Huan (in the 8th century, birth and death times unknown) was a Chinese travel writer born in Chang'an, the capital of the Tang Dynasty (618–907 C.E.). He was a Chinese soldier captured in the Battle of Talas, along with artisans, Fan Shu and Liu Ci, and fabric weavers, Le Wei and Lu Li, as mentioned in his writings. After a long journey through Arab countries, he returned by a ship to Guangzhou in 762 C. E. Thereafter he wrote his *Jingxingji (Travel Record)*, a work that has been almost completely lost afterwards. A few extracts survived in the *Tongdian (Encyclopedic History of Institutions)* by Du You, one of Du Huan's relatives, in Scroll 192 and Scroll 193 of the *Encyclopedic History of Institutions*, which was compiled in 801 C. E., totaling 1,513 Chinese characters. Modern researchers combed the countries that Du Huan traveled to, and noted in *Tongdian* by Du You. He always gave the citations, prefaced by “Du Huan in his *Travel Record* states” or “Du Huan also states...”

The main contents of *The Travel Record* are: 1. *Ba-han-na* [Ferghanah] Country; 2. *Kang Guo* [Samarkand]; 3. *Shi-zi Guo* [Ceylon]; 4. *Fo-lin* (Eastern Roman Empire); 5. *Mo-lin Guo* (Morocco); 6. Islamic Law, Nestorian Law and Zoroastrian Law; 7. *Bo-si Guo* [Persia]; 8. *Shi Guo* [Tachkend]; 9. *Sui-ye Guo* [Tokmak]; 10. *Dashi* [Arab] Countries; 11. *Mo-lu* [Merv] Country; and 12. *Zhan Guo* [Syria].

### **II. *Encyclopedic History of Institutions* by Du You**

Du You (735–821 C.E.), known also by his courtesy name Junqing, was born to an official family in Chang'an, capital of the Tang Dynasty. He became a scholar of the dynasty, and devoted thirty-six years to the compilation of the *Tongdian*, or *Encyclopedic History of Institutions* with 200 scrolls. This is a collection of laws, regulations, and general events from ancient times to

his own time. He was one-generation senior to Du Huan and a member of the same clan, and was therefore familiar with Du Huan. He used Du Huan's travel book in his *Encyclopedic History of Institutions*. In 801 C.E., he had his subordinates carry the completed work to Chang'an to submit to Emperor Dezong. Emperor Dezong issued an edict greatly praising the work. The work became popular and a key source of information on rites, music, criminal law, and governance for the people of the time. It was so detailed that the information from the last thousand years was easily accessible.

### **III. General Gao Xianzhi and the Battle of Talas**

Gao Xianzhi, or Go Seonji (d. in 756 C. E.) was a military commander well-known for taking part in multiple military expeditions to conquer the *Xiyu* ("Western Regions" literally, referring to modern Xinjiang and its adjacent central Asian regions). He was also known for his defeat at the Battle of Talas. The Battle of Talas (Arabic معركة نهر طلاس) was a military engagement between the Arab Abbasid Caliphate against the Chinese Tang Dynasty, governed at the time by Emperor Xuanzong. In July 751 AD, Tang and Abbasid forces met in the valley of the Talas River to vie for control of the Syr Darya region of central Asia. After a stalemate reached over several days of combat, the Tang lost the battle because the Karluks defected from the Tang's side to the Abbasid's side. The Tang's defeat is considered the event that marked both the end of Chinese western expansion and the Abbasid Caliphate's eastern expansion.

Around the new year of 756 C. E., Gao and another fellow general, Feng Changqing, were defending Tongguan Pass in today's Shaanxi province against the forces of An Lushan, a local general who had rebelled against Tang rule in 755. Both Gao and Feng offended the powerful eunuch, Bian Lingcheng. Bian then accused Feng of cowardice and Gao of corruption, and both of them were executed.

多鬚鬢似婆羅門女人端麗亦有文學與波斯不同出  
 駝馬驢騾殺羊等土多砂石不堪耕種無五穀惟食駝  
 象等肉破波斯拂菻始有米麵敬事天神又云其王常  
 遣人乘船將衣糧入海經涉八年未極西岸於海中見  
 一方石石上有樹枝赤葉青樹上總生小兒長六七寸  
 見人不語而皆能笑動其手腳頭著樹枝人摘取入手  
 卽乾黑其使得一枝還今在大食王處杜環經行記云  
一名亞俱羅其  
 大食王號暮門都此處其土女瓌偉長大衣裳鮮潔容  
 止閑麗女子出門必擁蔽其面無問貴賤一日五時禮  
 天食肉作齋以殺生為功德繫銀帶佩銀刀斷飲酒禁  
 音樂人相爭者不至毆擊又有禮堂容數萬人每七日

The above left four and half lines (small-sized characters) are from Du You's *Tongdian* that cites Du Huan's *Jing Xing Ji* [Travel Record] about *Dashi* [Arabia]. It begins "Du Huan in his Travel Record sates....."—source from Hangzhou: Zhejiang shuju, printed in the *bing-shen* year [1896 C. E.] according to the Wuying Hall [of the Forbidden City] Version.

The Battle of Talas resulted in Muslim control of Transoxiana for the next four hundred years. Control of this region was economically beneficial to the Abbasid because this region is important on the Silk Road. Chinese soldiers captured in the aftermath of the battle brought China's paper-making technology to the Middle East, from where it eventually spread to Europe.

#### **IV. Translation Remarks:**

- 1) The Chinese Pinyin Transcription System is used in the translation to spell the Chinese original terminology. Normally, they are italicized, and separation of sense group is divided with “-” mark.
- 2) The term “guo” in Chinese meaning “country,” “state,” “kingdom,” “khanate,” “empire,” etc. In this text translation, it is translated as “kingdom” or, occasionally, “country,” regardless of what else it might refer to.

#### **V. Translation of *The Travel Record* by Du Huan**

##### **Preface: Record of Du Huan's Experience**

One of the sons from my clan, [Du] Huan, followed the *Zhenxi* [Defense of West] Military Commissioner Gao Xainzhi for the West Expedition. They reached the West Sea [referring to the Caspian Sea] in the tenth year of the Tianbao reign [751 C. E.]. In the first year of the Baoying reign [762 C.E.], when a business ship returned to Guangzhou, he took the ship home. [When he came back,] he wrote his the *Jingxingji* [*The Travel Record*].

— *Encyclopedic History of Institutions*, Scroll 191, *bianfang-dain* [border defense] 7, *Xirong zongxu* [preface to the Rong people in the West]

**(All of the following translations are from the *Encyclopedic History of Institutions*, Scroll 193, *bianfang-dain* [border defense] 9. There were no paragraph divisions originally.)**

**[1], Record on *Ba-han-na Guo***

*Ba-han-na Guo* (Ferghanah) Kingdom<sup>1</sup> lies one thousand *li* south of the Talas<sup>2</sup>; there are mountains on its eastern borders. The Kingdom is two thousand *li* more from *Shu-lie*,<sup>3</sup> and one thousand *li* more west of *Shi* Kingdom [Tashkent]. There are several dozens of cities and several hundreds of thousands of army men [stationed in these cities]. In the third year of the Tianbao reign of the Great Tang Dynasty [744C. E.], [the Chinese throne married] Princess He-yi to the King [of this Kingdom].<sup>4</sup> The King has a *bo-luo* [polo tree] forest,<sup>5</sup> and a polo-ground in the forest. There are voles all over the mountains. The land is proper for growing grapes, āmra<sup>6</sup>, dates, peach and plum. From here to the West Sea [the Mediterranean Sea] are all earth houses. The people wear sheep hides and cotton clothes. Both men and women wear boots. Women do not use lead powder [for facial makeup], instead, they use natural indigo to smear on their eyelids.

**[2], Record on *Kang Guo***

*Kang* Kingdom [Samarkand] lies three hundred *li* more southwest<sup>7</sup> of *Mi*

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(1) In the present day, the Fergana Basin is on the up Syr Darya River, Kirgyzstan.

(2) In present-day Taraz, Kazakhstan.

(3) *Shu-lie* lies in the present-day *Shu-lie* county, Xinjiang, China.

(4) On the fourteenth day of the twelfth month of Tianbao reign (according to the Chinese Lunar calendar), the Chinese Emperor married Princess He-yi to Arslān Tarqhan, King of Ferghanah.

(5) A *bo-luo* [polo tree] is a kind of tree that is like a white poplar tree.

(6) The Sanskrit term for mango.

(7) Southwest is an error by Du Huan, it should be “southeast” instead, according to several contemporary historical documents.

Kingdom [Maimargh];<sup>8</sup> another name is *Sa-mo-jian*. The land is fertile and the people are rich. The kingdom is small; and the people's religion is called Zoroastrianism..... [some characters lost here] when asking advices on the kingdom's affairs, [the given opinions] are originally from here.

**[3], Record on *Shi-zi Guo* [Ceylon]**

*Shi-zi Guo*, another name *Xin-tan*, a third name *Po-luo-men*, refers to *Nan-Tianzhu* [South India]. In the northern part of the Kingdom, the appearance of the people is like that of the *Hu* people;<sup>9</sup> it is hot in Autumn and Summer days. In the southern part of the Kingdom, the people appear fiendish, there are always heavy rains. Here, they practice Buddhism and there are [many] temples. Every person wears earrings, and wraps a cloth around his waist.

**[4], Record on *Fu-lin Guo***

*Fu-lin* Kingdom<sup>10</sup> lies in the west of *Zhan* Kingdom.<sup>11</sup> There are several thousand *li* of distance in mountains [between the two kingdoms]; the other name [of *Fu-lin* Kingdom] is *Da-qin*. The color of the people is white red. Men wear plain clothes, but women all wear silks and pearls. The people like drinking and eating dry bread. There are many artisans who can do spinning and weaving. There are sometimes captured soldiers inside the kingdom who stick to their native customs. The opaque glass [produced here] is so exquisite that it is unparalleled in the world.

The King's city [capital] is eighty *li* long [in circumference] and the territories around it cover several thousand *li* [and go] in every direction. The Kingdom has a strong army and soldiers amounting to one million, who keep defending [the Kingdom] against *Dashi*. The west part of the Kingdom occupies the West

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(8) "Mi-" is an abbreviated form for *Mi-mo-he*.

(9) *Hu* refers to any foreign or alien people who are not Chinese.

(10) *Fu-lin* refers to the Eastern Roman Empire.

(11) "Zhan," old sound is *Shem* or *Shim*. F. Hirth argues that it is Syria. See Hirth, *China and the Roman Orient*, p.56.

Sea [the Mediterranean] and the northern part of the Kingdom, the Southern Sea;<sup>12</sup> the northern boundary connects Khazars Turkic [tribes].

There are markets in the West Sea [regions], the sellers and buyers are harmonious: when a buyer comes [to a market], the seller returns [home]; but when a seller comes [to a market], the buyer returns [home]. The seller would put his goods for sale [on the market] earlier, and the buyer would give his payment later. The deal is concluded except for the receipt of goods; after the seller collects the payment, the buyer can take the goods. This is called ghost-market.<sup>13</sup>

It is also said that in the west [of the Kingdom], there is a Women's Kingdom. When a woman is to give birth to a baby, she must drink the water [from a specific place to become pregnant].

#### **[5] Record of *Mo-lin Guo***

[The Travel Record also states]: I also went to *Mo-lin*<sup>14</sup> Country. It borders the southwest of *Qiu-sa-luo*<sup>15</sup> Kingdom. I must go across a great desert for two thousand li before I reach this Kingdom. The people here are dark, and their customs, bold and unconstrained. There grows no rice or wheat, and there is no grass or forest [on the land, neither]. Horses eat dried fish and people eat *he-mang*.<sup>16</sup> *He-mang* is Persian dates. Diseases from the miasma are serious [in the Kingdom].

#### **[6] Record on Islamic Law, Nestorian Law and Zoroastrian Law**

Since I travelled to many countries, [I know] they belong to a same racial Hu

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(12) The Southern Sea refers to the eastern part of the Mediterranean Sea that is between the Asia Minor and Egypt.

(13) "Ghost-market" refers to "night-market" because Chinese people believe that a ghost comes out only during night times.

(14) *Mo-lin* is popularly believed to be present-day Morocco and its adjacent North African region. This region became part of the Maghrib when Arabs conquered here. Qayrawan in Tunisia was its capital at the time.

(15) *Qiu-sa-luo* refers to Castille, which is the old name of present-day Spain.

(16) *He-mang*, also known as khurma, refers to palm dates.

people,<sup>17</sup> but they have different [religion] laws; these are the *Dashi* law [Islamic law], the *Da-qin* law [Nestorian law], and the *Xun-xun* law [Manicheist law].

The *Xun-xun* law allows intermarriages among one's own clan members, and [such a custom] is the most popular among all the alien people. When they have their food, they are not allowed to talk.

According to the *Dashi* law, when someone is brought to trial, one's brothers and sons and relatives, who, even if they have been involved in the case but only committed slight errors, will not be brought into troubles.<sup>18</sup> [*Dashi* people] do not eat the meat of the pig, dog, donkey, horse and [some] other animals. They do not respect the seniority of their parents nor do they believe in ghosts and spirits; they only worship the Heaven [Allah]. Their ritual is that every seven days, they spend one day as holiday, during which they do not do their businesses nor do they receive or pay out money. Instead, they drink and enjoy themselves in an undisciplined way during the whole day.

The doctors of *Da-qin*<sup>19</sup> are good at curing illness of eyes and dysentery. They can predict the coming disease, and can open one's head and let a worm out.

### **[7] Record on *Bo-si* [Persia]**

Du Huan in his *Travel Record* states: Persia has existed more than one hundred years already since the time when it was conquered by *Dashi* [Arabia] to the time of the Tianbao reign [of the Tang Dynasty] [742-755 C. E.].<sup>20</sup>

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(17) "Hu" is a popular word in ancient China to generally refer to any alien or barbarian people outside China.

(18) Du Huan finds this strange because he is comparing it to relative laws in China, according to which when a man commits a crime, the whole clan is implicated.

(19) Another contemporary book, *Tongzhi* (*The General Annals*, which is edited by Zheng Jiao and completed in 1161 C.E.; see "Scroll 196, *Dashi*" of the book) records this as "tu-ren," meaning the "local people," instead of "Da-Qin" which refers to the Eastern Roman Empire.

(20) Persia was conquered by Arabia in the third year of the Yonghui reign of the Tang Dynasty [652. C.E.]. By the time of the end year of the Tianbao reign [755 C.E.], it had lasted for 102 years.

## [8] Record on *Shi Guo* [Tachkend]<sup>21</sup>

Du Huan in his *Travel Record* states: The [*Shi*] Kingdom's capital is called *Zhe-zhi*, another name is Da-wan. During the Tianbao reign, the *Zhenxi* [Defense of West] Military Commissioner Gao Xainzhi captured the King and his wife and his sons and returned to the capital [of the Tang dynasty with the captured family].<sup>22</sup>

There are two rivers in the Kingdom, one is the Pearl River [Ajak-Tach], the other is *Zhihe* River [Sihun, or Yaxartes, or Sir Daria];<sup>23</sup> they all flow to the northwest. The land is flat and wide, [growing] many kinds of fruits; there [also] breed good dogs and horses [in the Kingdom].

## [9] Record on *Sui-ye Guo* [Tokmak Kingdom]

Du Huan [in his *Travel Record*] also states about *Sui-ye* Kingdom: to go one thousand *li* more from the northwest of [the headquarters of] *An'xi* Protectorate,<sup>24</sup> one may reach the *Dun-da* Mount.<sup>25</sup> The southern side [of the Mount] is the boundary of the Great Tang [Dynasty] and the northern side is the southern boundary of the *Tu-qi-shi* [Turgach]<sup>26</sup>.

To go to southwest for two-thousand *li* more, [one may reach] the *Cong-ling* Mountains [the Pamirs].<sup>27</sup> The rivers that flow across the southern sides of the Mountains all go into China and finally into the East [China] Sea; the rivers

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(21) “Tach” means “stone” in Turkic languages and “kend” means “city.” However, the Chinese name for the city “Zhe-zhe” comes from Persian “chaj.”

(22) The capital is Chang'an (present-day Xi'an), Shaanxi province. General Gao Xianzhi played a trick to capture the King and his family; this incident created discontent in the *Xiyu* (the West Regions) and led to the Battle of Talas.

(23) The present name is Naryn. Feng Chengjun argues that Du Huan made a mistake here as the two rivers are in reality the same one river.

(24) During the Tang dynasty, this region was the Protectorate of the Tang dynasty. The headquarters or the capital was in Qiu-ci (i.e., the present-day Kuche county, Xinjiang).

(25) “Dun-da Mount” is Bedal on the Silk Road along the southern side of the Tianshan Mountains, Xinjiang.

(26) The Turgach was one of the five Western Turkic tribes

(27) The “Cong-ling” means “Onion Mountains” because it grows onions on the Plateau. “Two thousand *li* more” is not the direct distance; the distance is less than one thousand *li*. It shows that the people at the time had to walk on zigzag roads in the deep mountains.

that flow across the northern sides of the Mountains all go to the territories of the *Hu* peoples and flow into the North Sea [the Balkhash Lake].

Continuing one's trip northward for several days, one can reach the Snow Sea.<sup>28</sup> The Sea is located among mountains, and it frequently rains and snows on summer days, giving it its name. There is a narrow road [on the Sea regions], and there are water stomas on the sides of the road. The road cuts into the [cliffs] and goes as high as sky; once a walker falls [from the road], he cannot be found in the abyss.

Travelling from the north of the *Dun-da* Mount for one thousand *li* further, one can reach the *Sui-ye* Plain. On the eastern corner of the Plain, there lies the *Re-hai* [the Warm Sea];<sup>29</sup> this place is cold but not enough to freeze, thus giving it its name.

There is also the city of *Sui-ye* [Tokmak]; here in the seventh year of the Tianbao reign [748 C. E.], the Beiting<sup>30</sup> Military Commissioner Wang Zhengjian has gone on a punitive expedition [to this city]. The city walls were destroyed, towns and villages became withered and fallen. At the place where Princess Jiao-he once lived<sup>31</sup> still stands the Dayun Temple<sup>32</sup> [that the Princess has established].

The west of [the *Sui-ye*] Plain connects *Shi* Kingdom; [the Plain] is about one thousand *li* long. There are other tribes of different surnames [living on the Plain],<sup>33</sup> and there is another surnamed Turkic people,<sup>34</sup>[too]. [These tribes and people] have their own troops, respectively; each with several hundreds of thousands soldiers. Their castles are close to each other, and they are seeking

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(28) The Snow Sea refers to the group of lakes in Djitym Bel.

(29) It is called Issik-Kul located in present-day Kyrgyzstan.

(30) Beiting is located in today's Jimsar, Xinjiang.

(31) In the seventh year of the Kaiyuan reign (719 C. E.), the Emperor of the Tang Dynasty married Princess Jio-he to A-shi-na-huai-dao, the king of the ten-surnamed Turkic Khan.

(32) The Dayun Temple is a Buddhist temple.

(33) There are altogether nine surnames; they are Samarkand, Bokhara, Kebud, Tachkend, Maimargh, Kosanyah, Khwarism, Wardan, and Kesh.

(34) This refers to Karluk people.

for any opportunity to fight against one another. All the farmers have [always] their armors on, robbing and capturing their enemies as their slaves.

Connecting the west-southern corner of the Plain is a city called Talas, which is an important city in the *Shi* Kingdom; this is the very place where in the tenth year of the Tianbao reign [751 C. E.] [General] Gao Xianzhi was defeated [by the *Dashi* troops]. From here to the east of the West Sea, since the third month to the ninth month [according Chinese lunar calendar], there has been no rain at all; [people have to] till their lands with melted snow. Here it is proper to grow barley, wheat, rice, pea, and *bi-dou*.<sup>35</sup> People would have wine, proso millet wine, and yogurt.

#### [10] Record of *Dashi* [Arabia]

Du Huan in his *The Travel Record* states: *Dashi*, another name *A-ju-luo* [Aqūr],<sup>36</sup> whose King is called *mu-men*,<sup>37</sup>[moved its] capital here.<sup>38</sup> The women [of the country] are tall and beautiful, with their clothes bright and clean. When a woman goes outdoors, she must veil her face. Regardless of whether he is noble or common, a man prays five times daily. When they fast, they [on the contrary] eat meat, regarding butchering animals as a merit and virtue. Men wear silver girdles with silver knives suspended. They abstain from drinking and do not use music. When they vie against one another, they never go to the degree of fighting [against one another]. They also have an assembly hall<sup>39</sup> that accommodates several tens of thousands of people. [Once] every seven days, the King [Caliph] comes [to the hall] for prayer. He would sit high and give his speech to the public, saying, “Life is difficult and the Way of Heaven

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(35) “*Bi-dou*” is actually another name for pea.

(36) “*A-ju-luo*” is “Aqūr,” a term that the Arabs called the Mesopotamia (the regions of the two rivers, the Tigris and the Euphrates).

(37) *Mumen*, also spelt as *maomen*, means “King of *Mumen*” literally, referring to “the Khalifah of the Arabic Empire.” The Chinese translation is from “Amir al mummenin”; “Amir” means “leader or head” and “mummenin” means “followers.”

(38) The capital should be Kufa in present-day Iraq.

(39) As the context goes on with same topic, I think this should be in Kufa; but Bai Shouyi argues that the “assembly hall” here is the mosque at Mecca.

[Islam] is not easy [to grasp]. Whether adultery or robbery or theft, or neglect of minor points of behavior, or lying for some small trifles, or [anything just for] keeping safety for yourself but causing harm to others, or bullying the poor and mocking the humble—even if you engage in one of such misconducts, it is a great crime indeed. When you go to a war and you are slain by the enemy, you can go to the Heaven [Allah]; when you kill one [soldier] of your enemy, you would receive abundant reward [by the Heaven].” Such preaching teaches the people of the country to accept and follow readily. The law [here] is lenient, and the funeral is simple.

Whatever the earth can grow, one can find its products in all the shops in this city. The city is [a hub that is] like the hub of a wheel with its spokes. Abundant products from all directions are gathered here and then are cheaply sold [to different places]; the markets are full of [even] silk and pearls are full of the markets. Every street and lane is full of camels, horses, donkeys, and mules for sale. [The people here] carve rock sugar in the form of a hut, which is similar to the [edible] *bao-nian* [horse-coach of the emperor]<sup>40</sup> in China. When a festival comes, [the gifts such as] verulia [opaque glass]<sup>41</sup> utensils, brass bottles and bowls that will be presented to noble men are numerous. [Here] rice and wheat-flour are not any different from those in China. The fruits are badam [almond] and palm dates; the turnip here is as big as *dou*<sup>42</sup> and its flavor is very good. Other vegetables are the same as those in other countries. Some of big grapes are as large as eggs. There are two kinds of rare oils—one is called yasaman [Arabic “yasmin”], another is *mo-za-shi*,<sup>43</sup> and two kinds of rare herbs—*cha-sai-peng* and *li-lu-ba*.<sup>44</sup>

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(40) *Bao-nian* is a kind of horse-coach carried by emperor or noble men in ancient China, with a cover like an umbrella above the coach.

(41) The original Chinese pronunciation is “liu-li.”

(42) Dou is a Chinese measuring tool for grains, one dou equals to 6.66 cubic meters. It is usually made with canes.

(43) *Mo-za-shi*, not clear yet of what it refers to.

(44) *Cha-sai-peng* and *li-lu-ba*, so far, no scholar has identified what herbs they are.

[There are technicians of] silk-weaving looms, [and there are also] goldsmiths and silversmiths, and painters. The Han Chinese artisans who can paint are the Jingzhao<sup>45</sup> men, Fan Shu and Liu Ci; the silk-weaving loom technicians are the Hedong<sup>46</sup> men, Le Huan and Lü Li.

The steeds here, as sayings goes, are the [offspring of the] interbreed between the dragon in the West Sea and a [common] horse, whose bellies are smaller and whose ankles are longer [than those of common horses]; a good steed of such kind can run one thousand *li* within one day.<sup>47</sup> The camels here are small and strong, they have only one hump; a good camel of this kind can gallop one thousand *li* within one day. There are also ostriches, with the height of more than four *chi*,<sup>48</sup> whose paws are like camel feet, and whose necks [are strong enough that] can carry a man to go for five to six *li*; an egg of an ostrich is as big as three *sheng*.<sup>49</sup> There are also zaytūn [olive] trees here, whose nuts are like the dates matured in summer days [in China]. The nuts can be used for [producing] oil, and the oil can cure diseases from miasma.

The climate is warm; it never snows nor is there frost. People here suffer from malaria, and five of ten people die [of such disease]. Today, the country has conquered forty to fifty countries and they have all become its subordinates; [*Dashi*] dispatches its troops to garrison in the [conquered] countries. The territory [of *Dashi*] covers all the West Sea regions.<sup>50</sup>

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(45) Jingzhao refers to Chang'an [present-day Xi'an, Shaanxi province], the capital, and its adjacent regions. This sentence and the following two sentences are confusing; there must be some words lost, which makes the narration not cohesive. Obviously, Du Huan is stating that some of the Chinese artisans with him who were captured during the Battle of Talas.

(46) Hedong refers to Shanxi province during the Tang dynasty.

(47) This is described by Westerners as "Arabian steed."

(48) One meter equals to 3 Chinese chi.

(49) 10 *sheng* equals 1 *dou*. See note 1. The book *Tongzhi* (see Note 2) records it here as "2 *sheng*" instead of "3 *sheng*."

(50) Until the hundredth anniversaries of Prophet Mohammed's death in 723 C.E., the Arabian Empire controlled the vast land of North Africa from the Pyrenees Mountains and Syria, Armenia, the Mesopotamian regions, Persia, and central Asia. The West Sea refers to the Mediterranean Sea.

**[11] Record on *Mo-lu Guo* [Merv or Muru]**

*Mo-lu* Kingdom lies on more than seven hundred *li* away from the southwest of *Ya-mei Guo* [Amol].<sup>51</sup> A *Hu* [barbarian] people with the surname “Mo” are the aboriginals. The capital city[-wall] is fifteen *li* long in perimeter, with iron [gates] as the city gates. There is a salt pond and two Buddhist temples inside the city. Between the east and the west [of its territorial boundaries] is one hundred and forty *li*; and between the north and the south, one hundred and eighty *li*. The fences of villages connect one another and trees interlace their branches [with each other]. The boundaries around the country are encircled by fluid sand.<sup>52</sup> A big river<sup>53</sup> flows to the south of the Kingdom and has many branches to irrigate the entire Kingdom. The land is lush and fertile and the people are clean and tidy. The city walls are tall and wide, the city districts and houses are straight and fair; wooden materials [of the houses] are sculptured and earthen walls are painted.

There are elegant cotton clothes and lamb-fur coats, of which a top-graded one is worth of several hundred [silver *liang*].<sup>54</sup> The fruits [grown here] are red peach, white crab apple, brownish plum; the melons here, among which a big kind is called *xun-zhi*,<sup>55</sup> and one is enough for ten people to share it. An oriental pickling melon is as long as four *chi* more.<sup>56</sup> Vegetables include turnip, radish, long onion, scallion, green onion, brassica rapa, cucumber, *ge-lan* [field pennycress, or *thlaspi arvense*], leaf beet,<sup>57</sup> aniseed, oriental onion [allium chinense], [edible] gourd;<sup>58</sup> and, as for grape, it is especially plentiful.

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(51) Amol lies on the southern bank of the Caspian Sea.

(52) It means the city was located on an oasis and was surrounded by desert.

(53) “Big river” refers to the Oxus River (known as Amu Daria today).

(54) One *liang* equals to 0.05 kilogram. This translator argues that Du Huan must use his contemporary Tang dynastical currency to measure values.

(55) Probably referring to the local water-melon.

(56) One meter equals to three Chinese *chi*.

(57) Leaf beet: Latin term is “beta vulgari L.var.cicla L.”.

(58) The Latin term is “lagenaria siceraria var. clavate.”

There are also cattle, wild horse, ducks, rock partridge [alectoris chuka]. The custom is that the fifth month [according Chinese lunar calendar] is the beginning of a new year, during which time people donate painted jars to one another. There is the [polo] ball festival and the swing-playing festival. The governor in charge of the eastern province of *Dashi* [Arabia] rules this country. From this country to the West Sea, the *Dashi* [Arab people] and *Bo-si* [Persian people] inhabit in a mixed manner; their [mutual] custom is that they worship the Heaven [Allah], that they do not eat the meat of dead animals, and the meat of tabooed animals. They smear their hairs with sweet balm.

### [12] Record on *Zhan Guo* [Syria]

[Du Huan in his *Travel Record*] also states: *Zhan* [Sham]<sup>59</sup> Kingdom lies to the west border of *Dashi*, whose territorial border amounts to several thousand *li* long.<sup>60</sup> [The people here] build houses with tiles [on the roofs] and with stones for [house] walls. Grains are especially cheap. A big river<sup>61</sup> flows eastward into *A-ju-luo* [Arabia]. Businessmen come back and forth for buying and selling grains one after another. The [shapes of the] people are big and tall; and their clothes, wide and large, which is somewhat like the Confucius attire. *Zhan* Kingdom has five governors [in charge of their provinces]; their army soldiers total ten thousand. The Kingdom borders the Turkic Khazar<sup>62</sup> in the north; and [further] beyond the north of Khazar, there lies another [tribe of] Turkic people, whose feet are like those of oxen and who would like to practice cannibalism.<sup>63</sup>

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(59) This refers to Syria. The Chinese character “zhan” here was pronounced as “shan” in ancient time. “Sham” is the old name of Damascus, capital of Syria.

(60) Here it refers to the entire country, not the city only.

(61) The river refers to the Euphrates.

(62) The present spelling is Kazak.

(63) Du Huan here drew a false record from a Chinese historical book, the *Xin Wudai-shi* [New History of the Five Dynasties] (recording the history between 907-960 C.E. with five successive short dynasties), see “Scroll 73, si-yi-fulu, 2 [attachments of the alien countries from four directions, 2]” of the book. In this book, there is a record that a Chinese Hu Qiao came back from Qidan [Cathy] in 953 C.E. and told a story of the “oxen-feet Turkic people” and that “their land is extremely cold,” and so on.

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## **Chapter 2**

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## The Earliest Record on Sino-Arab Maritime Route in a Chinese Official Dynastic Book ►

### I. Introduction to Jia Dan

The *Xintangshu*, *New Book of Tang*, is one of the official dynastic historical books on the Tang Dynasty (618-907 CE) history. It was written by a team under the supervision of the Northern Song Dynasty (960-1126 CE) scholars Ouyang Xiu and Song Qi. It contains 225 *juan*, or “scrolls.” It took 17 years to complete the compiling of the book and was submitted to the throne in 1060 CE.

The primary sources for *New Book of Tang* were not only official documents but also miscellaneous historical writings, stone inscriptions, essays and narratives. Scrolls 37-47 are on administrative geography. One of the scrolls, Scroll 43, it gives information on the relationships between China and foreign countries. This part was taken from Jia Dan’s geographical book, *Huanghua sida ji*, or *The Countries in the Four Directions of August China*.

Jia Dan (730 – 805 CE), courtesy name Dunshi and formally duke Yuanjing of Wei, was a geographer and official at the Tang court. His family was from Cangzhou prefecture (in present-day Hebei province). During the Tianbao reign (742-756 CE), Jia Dan passed the imperial bureaucratic promotion examination and was made the sheriff of Linqing County (in Shandong Province); later he was transferred to several other positions until he was recalled to Chang’an, the capital, to serve as the minister of vassal affairs, which included the responsibilities of receiving and entertaining foreign emissaries. As the minister of vassal affairs, he would have met with foreign envoys in order to acquire information about their native countries. This included customs as well as geographic information, as a map was drawn after the geographic information was acquired from the

interview. Jia's remarkable knowledge of foreign geography was derived from these interviews with foreign delegates and diplomats.

Jia Dan's book, *The Countries in the Four Directions of August China*, divided into 40 scrolls, has not entirely survived; fortunately, some main parts were included in the official dynastic historical book, *New Book of Tang*. With respect to the maritime routes to foreign countries, Jia gave two routes, one from the Bohai Sea to Silla in Korea in East Asia, and another one from Guangzhou to Arab countries in West Asia.

The following text, which was originally entitled by Jian Dan as "Guangzhou tonghai yidao" (The Maritime Route to Alien Countries from Guangzhou), is regarded as the oldest record of the maritime Silk Road. This is one of the two roads described as "one belt and one road" by Chinese government and scholars today. It starts from a Chinese coastal city, Guangzhou, and goes through Malacca towards Sri Lanka and India, then through the eastern and northern shores of the regions around Arabian Sea, and finally to the capital Baghdad of *Dashi*, Baghdad (or Tazi in Persian, meaning Arabia, refereeing to the Abbasid Empire). This route was also confirmed by the contemporary Arab merchant, Sulaiman (see *Accounts of Indian and China by Two Mohammedan Travelers, Who Went to Those Parts in the 9th Century*).

## **II. Translation Remarks:**

- 1) The Chinese Pinyin Transcription System is used in the translation to spell the Chinese original terminology. Normally, they are italicized, and separation of sense group is divided with "-" mark.
- 2) The term "guo" in Chinese means "country," "state," "kingdom," "khanate," "empire," etc.. In this text translation, it is translated as "kingdom" regardless of what it might refer to.
- 3) The term "Dashi," as it is clearly expressed, is a collective name meaning "Arabia," which includes many "kingdoms."

### III. Text Translation:

#### The Maritime Routes to Alien Countries from Guangzhou

To sail 200 *li*<sup>1</sup> from Guangzhou in the southeastern direction by sea, one can reach *Tunmen-shan*.<sup>2</sup> To further sail westward with fair wind for two days, one can reach *Jiuzhoushi*.<sup>3</sup> To further sail southward for two days, one can reach *Xiang-shi*.<sup>4</sup> To further sail southwestward for three days, one can reach *Zhan-bulao-shan* Mount [Pulau Cham, or Culaocham]<sup>5</sup>. This mount is located 200 *li* away from the east [border] of *Huanshan* Kingdom [Champa Kingdom],<sup>6</sup> on the sea. To further sail southward for two days, one can reach *Ling-shan*.<sup>7</sup> To further sail for one day, one can reach *Mendu* Kingdom.<sup>8</sup> To further sail for one day, one can reach *Gudan* [Kauthara] Kingdom.<sup>9</sup> To further sail for two days, one can reach *Bentuolang* prefecture [Panduranga].<sup>10</sup> To further sail for two days, one can come to *Juntunong-shan* Mount [Poulo Condore].<sup>11</sup> To further sail for five days, one can reach the Strait; the barbarian people here call it *zhi* [the Strait];<sup>12</sup> it stretches one hundred *li* wide between the southern bank and the northern bank. On the [land of] the northern bank lies *Luoyue* [Siam]<sup>13</sup> Kingdom, on

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- (1) Kilometer equals to 2 [Chinese] *li*. However, some scholars argue that the distance of *li* in the Tang dynasty was probably shorter than it is today.
  - (2) *Tunmen-shan* connects the northern part of the Lantau Island, *i.e.*, the northwestern part of Kowloon Peninsula, Hong Kong.
  - (3) *Jiuzhoushi* is the northern part of the Taya Islands, Hainan, China.
  - (4) *Xiang-shi* is called “Dazhou Dao” in Chinese, which is located far away from the southeastern part of Hainan, China.
  - (5) *Zhan-bulao-shan* is called “Pulau Cham” in Malay and “Culaocham” in English today; here the Chinese term is obviously from the Malay language; it is one part of the today’s Champa Island, Vietnam.
  - (6) *Huanshan* refers to the ancient Champa Kingdom.
  - (7) *Ling-shan* is the present-day Cape Qui Nhon in the southeastern coastal region of Vietnam.
  - (8) *Mendu* refers to the Cap Varella, Vietnam.
  - (9) *Gudan* is the present-day Nha Trang, Vietnam.
  - (10) *Bentuolang* is the present-day Phan Rang, Vietnam.
  - (11) *Juntunong-shan* is the present-day Con Dao, Vietnam.
  - (12) “Selat Melaka” in Malay language means “Malacca Strait.”
  - (13) *Luoyue* is today’s Johor, Malaysia.

the [land of] southern bank lies *Fo-shi* [Srivijaya] Kingdom.<sup>14</sup> To further sail eastward on waters for four to five days, one can reach *Heling* [Kaling] Kingdom;<sup>15</sup> this is the largest kingdom in the central part of the South Land. To sail out of the west [mouth] of the Strait, for three days, one can reach *Gege-sengzhi* [Kakap Sengi] Kingdom;<sup>16</sup> this is an island located to the northwestern [border] corner of *Fo-shi* Kingdom; many people of this kingdom would violently rob other people, so voyagers feel fearful [of the robbers here].

*Geluo* [Kalah]<sup>17</sup> Kingdom lies [also] on the [land of] the northern bank. At the western frontier of *Geluo* lies *Geguluo* [Kakula] Kingdom.<sup>18</sup> To further sail from *Gege-sengzhi* for four to five days, one can reach *Shengdeng-zhou*.<sup>19</sup> To further sail for four to five days, one can reach *Polu* [Parlak] Kingdom.<sup>20</sup> To further sail for six days, one can reach *Poguo-galan* Island.<sup>21</sup> To further sail northwestern-ward for four days, one can reach *Shizi-guo* [Lion Country],<sup>22</sup> whose northern bank is one hundred *li* away from the

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(14) *Fo-shi* comes from “Srivijaya,” which is a Sanskrit term meaning “victorious” or “excellence.” it is city kingdom called *Shih-li-fo-shi* in Chinese and abbreviated as *Fo-shi*; it is located in the island of Sumatra, Indonesia. The main part was Palembang and Jambi at the time.

(15) *Heling* refers to Java, Indonesia.

(16) *Gege-sengzhi* (*Kakap Sengi*) is an island of the Brouwers Archipelago beyond the northern coast of Sumatra, Indonesia.

(17) *Geluo*, the present name of which is Kedah, is in today’s Malaysia.

(18) *Geguluo* is in the southwest part of the Kra Isthmus, Malaysia.

(19) *Shengdeng-zhou* lies in the Deli region (to the north of the present-day Medan) of the northeastern bank of Sumatra, Indonesia.

(20) *Polu* is Barus beyond the northwestern bank of Sumatra, Indonesia.

(21) *Poguo-galan* should be Sri Lanka. Chen Jiarong argues that some historians regard this place as Nicobar Island on the Andaman Sea (belonging to India today), which is a mistake because the days spent by sailing do not correspond with reality. This term must be a misprinting for *Suoli-galan*, which was also called *Suoli-galan-shan* [“shan” means “mount”], or *Silan-shan*, as these two terms also appeared in another official dynastic history book, the *Song Shi* (*History of the Song Dynasty*), referring to Sri Lanka. The term *Suoli* (or *Silan*) originates from a Sanskrit term, “Cola,” and referred to Sri Lanka, because Sri Lanka was historically invaded by the people from the coastal part of Coromandel (shortened as “Cola”) and since it had been called so.

(22) The kingdom is Simhalauipa, belonging to India today. Here, Chen Jiarong argues that the sailing is in the same country; here, the journey comes to the capital [of *Suoli-galan-shan*], Anuradhapura.

great bank of the South *Tianzhu* [Sindhu].<sup>23</sup> To further sail westward for four days, via *Meilai* [Male] Kingdom,<sup>24</sup> [one can reach] the southernmost tip of South *Tianzhu*. To further sail, via ten more small kingdoms,<sup>25</sup> one can reach the western territory of *Poluomen* [Brahman].<sup>26</sup> To further sail northwestern-ward for two days, one can reach *Baxue* [Broach] Kingdom.<sup>27</sup> To further sail for ten days, via five small kingdoms, one can reach *Tixu* [Diul] Kingdom;<sup>28</sup> the Kingdom has the *Milantai* [Mihran] River,<sup>29</sup> whose another name is the *Xintou* [Indus] River, which originates from northern *Bokun*<sup>30</sup> Kingdom and flows westward to the northern *Tixu* Kingdom, and then to the sea.

To further sail from *Tixu* Kingdom for twenty days, via twenty more small kingdoms, one can reach *Tiluoluhe* [Dierrarah] Kingdom,<sup>31</sup> whose another name is *Luoheyi* Kingdom. The people of the Kingdom erected an ornamental column on the sea,<sup>32</sup> and arranged a torch on its top during night so that sailors would not lose their directions. To further sail westward for one day, one can reach *Wula* [Ubullah] Kingdom,<sup>33</sup> [and one can see] the

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(23) *Tianzhu*, a popular Chinese translation in classical books, which refers to India.

(24) *Meilai* refers to the coastal region of Malabar, particularly around Quilon in present-day India.

(25) Here, “ten more small kingdoms” are all in the present-day western part of India.

(26) *Poluomen* also refers to India.

(27) *Baxu* [Broach] lies in the northwestern coastal region of India.

(28) *Tixu* probably refers to the present-day Daibul, which lies to the west of the mouth of the Indus River, Pakistan.

(29) *Milantai* refers to Indus River; “Nahr Mihran” is the Arabic name.

(30) *Bokun* refers to Bruzha in Baltistan, Kashmir. Chinese historical books called it *Bolü* Kingdom. In 720 CE, it was divided into two kingdoms, called the Big *Bolü* Kingdom and the Small *Bolü* Kingdom, respectively. Here it refers to the Big *Bolü* Kingdom.

(31) *Tiluoluhe* is near Abādān in west Persia, near the Persian Gulf.

(32) The original Chinese here is *Huabiao*, meaning “ornamental column.” A *Huabiao* was originally erected in front of the royal palace, with wooden poles, to allow the people to write criticism of government policies. Gradually, its function was limited to ceremonial ornaments only, marble columns were used instead of wooden poles, and they were erected in front of palaces or tombs, decorated with a coiled dragon and auspicious clouds.

(33) *Wula* lies in present-day Ubolla to the east of Basra, Iraq.

*Feilila* [Euphrates] River of the *Dashi* [Tazi]<sup>34</sup> Kingdom flowing southward into the sea. To further sail upstream by boat for two days, one can reach *Moluo* Kingdom;<sup>35</sup> this is an important city of the *Dashi*. To further travel northwest-ward on land for one thousand *li*, one can reach *Maomen-wang* [Maomen-King's] capital *Fuda* [Baghdad] City.<sup>36</sup>

From the southern territory of *Poluomen*, between *Meilai* Kingdom and *Wula* Kingdom, the sailings are all along the east coastal line [of land]. The western parts of sailings from the west coastal line of *Meilai* [Male] Kingdom are all in the territories of *Dashi* [Arabia]; the westernmost part [of *Dashi*] is *Sanlan* Kingdom.<sup>37</sup> To further sail from Sanlan Kingdom northward for twenty-days, via ten-plus small kingdoms, one can reach *She* [Shihr] Kingdom.<sup>38</sup> To further sail for ten days, via six to seven small kingdoms, one can reach *Sayiquhejie* Kingdom;<sup>39</sup> it is on the west coastal line. To further sail for six to seven days, via six to seven small kingdoms, one can reach *Moxun* Kingdom.<sup>40</sup> To further sail northwestern-ward for six to seven days, via ten more small kingdoms, one can reach *Bali-he-monan* [Oual-al-Manama] Kingdom.<sup>41</sup> To further sail for one day, one can reach *Wula* Kingdom; [in this way,] one returns to the east coastal way [back].

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(34) *Dashi* is a collective term for Arabian Empire.

(35) *Moluo* is present-day Basra, Iraq.

(36) *Maomen-wang* means "King of *Maomen*" literally, referring to "the Khalifah of the Arabic Empire" at the time. The Khalifah was Harunal-Rashid (786-809 CE). The Chinese translation is from "Amir al mummenin"; "Amir" means "leader or head" and "mummenin" means "followers."

(37) *Sanlan* refers to Dares Salaam, belonging to present-day Tanzania. "Sanlan" is the Chinese translation of "Salaam."

(38) *She* refers to Schehr of the southern part of Yemen today.

(39) *Sayiquhejie* is near Muskat, belonging to Oman today.

(40) *Moxun* refers to present-day Sohar, in the northeastern Oman; "Mezoen" is its Persian name. The Chinese translation here is obviously from Persian.

(41) *Bali-he-monan* probably refers to Bahrain in the Persian Gulf, or probably present-day Makaran region of Iran (the old name of this region is "Bahr Mokarm").

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## **Chapter 3**

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## The Sino-Arab Diplomatic and Commercial Communications during the Tang Dynasty as Recorded in *Cefu Yuangui* ►

### I. Introduction to *Cefu Yuangui*

The *Cefu Yuangui* was the largest encyclopedia compiled during the Song dynasty (960–1279 CE), which was completed between 1005 and 1013 CE. It was the last of the Four Great Books of the Song, the previous three encyclopedias published in the 10th century. The encyclopedia was originally named *Narrative of Monarchs and Officials in the Past Dynasties* but when submitted to the throne, Emperor Zhenzong changed the title to *Cefu Yuangui* [*Archival Palace as Great Oracle Tortoise*]. “Archival Palace” means “an enormous storehouse of literature.” As for “Great Tortoise Oracle,” it comes from the ancient Chinese people who used tortoise shells in pyromantic divination. Today, Chinese people still use the terms such as “*gui-jian*” or “*gui-jing*” [“tortoise-lesson” or “tortoise-mirror”]; these terms are used both as verbs and nouns, simply meaning “to draw lesson from” or “to look into a mirror for,” some old models as reference. Thus, the meaning of the book title can be paraphrased as “the enormous book that can be used as outstanding models or magic mirror for rulers and administrators to take reference from the old historical events so as to guide them for their career.” The compilation of the book was started in 1005 and finished in 1013 by Wang Qinruo and numerous scholars. It was divided into 1,000 scrolls/volumes. It was ranked second in the *Siku Quanshu* collections, consisting of 9.4 million Chinese characters, which included many records of important historical events, political essays, biographies of rulers and subjects, memorials and decrees, etc..

### II. Translation Remarks

The following “Text Translations” are from the records of the last several scrolls in *Cefu Yuangui*; besides, there are three more texts from other contemporary historical books. All the texts are concerned with the Sino-Arab communication events between 651 and 801 CE during the Chinese

Tang dynasty (618-917 CE). Several points must be given to readers for the translations:

- 1) Chinese names will use the Chinese Pinyin Transcription System and their English equivalents, or Translator’s interpretations, or supplementary texts will be put in square brackets (“[ ]”);
- 2) Since historical records use Chinese lunar calendar, this translator uses the *wannianli* [Perpetual Chinese Lunar Calendar] available at <[http:// wannianli.tianqi.com](http://wannianli.tianqi.com)> to find exact dates of each individual event in line with Gregorian calendar;
- 3) The text translations uses historical present tense for English expressions.

### III. Text Translation

1. In the eighth month of the second year of the Yonghui reign [of the Tang dynasty] [between June 21-July 19, 651 CE], *Dashi-guo* [Arab Caliphate] starts to dispatch its envoys to pay tribute [to the Tang court].

— *Cefu Yuangui* [*Archival Palace as Great Tortoise Oracle*], Scroll 970/*waichen-bu* [the ministry of local officials] 15/*chaogong* [Tributes] 3. (p.11232)

2. In the sixth month of the sixth year [of the Yonghui reign] [between April 24-May 22, 655 CE], *Dashi-guo* [Arab Caliphate] and *Yan-mo-nian*<sup>1</sup> dispatch their envoys to pay tribute [to the Tang court].

— *Cefu Yuangui*, Scroll 970/*waichen-bu* 15/*chaogong* 3. (p.11232)

**Remark:** Here “*Dashi-guo*” is probably “*Da-shi-guo*,” the two countries use different characters (but same pronunciation in Chinese); the former refers to Arab Caliphate and the latter, “Tachkend,” which is in the present-day Uzbekistan. In this context, it uses the character “*Da-shi-guo*,” which

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(1) Zhou Baoming argues that *Yan-mo-nian* is a tribe of the Kurluk (Qarluq) in central Asia.

is a mistake. We know this because another contemporary book, *The Old Book of Tang*, clearly states for the same event, “in the sixth month of the second year of the Yonghui reign, *Dashi-guo* [Arab Caliphate] dispatches his envoys to pay tributes to the court.”

3. In the fifth month of the second year [of the Yonglong reign] [between March 26-April 23, 681 CE], *Dashi-guo* [Arab Caliphate] and Tokharoiguo<sup>2</sup> respectively dispatches their envoys to pay tribute [to the Tang court].  
— *Cefu Yuanguai*, Scroll 970/ *waichen-bu* 15/ *chaogong* 3. (p.11233)

4. In the fifth month of the first year [of the Yongchun reign] [between March 26-April 23, 682 CE], *Dashi-guo* [Arab Caliphate] dispatches its envoys to present their native products [to the Tang court].  
— *Cefu Yuanguai*, Scroll 970/ *waichen-bu* 15/ *chaogong* 3. (p.11233)

5. In the third month of the third year [of Chang’an reign] [between January 27-February 24, 703 CE], *Dashi-guo* [Arab Caliphate] dispatches its envoys to present good steeds.  
— *Cefu Yuanguai*, Scroll 970/ *waichen-bu* 15/ *chaogong* 3. (p.11234)

**Remark:** This record is also seen in the *Jiutangshu* [*Old Book of Tang*].

6. In the twelfth month of the second year [of the Jingyun reign] [between October 15-November 12, 711 CE], *Tujue* [the Turkic, referring to Uyghur Khanate] presents grains; *Dashi* [Arabia], *Xinluo* [Silla]<sup>3</sup>, *Lin-yi* [Camp]<sup>4</sup>, and *Shi-zi-guo* [Ceylon]<sup>5</sup> dispatch their envoys to present their local products.  
— *Cefu Yuanguai*, Scroll 970/ *waichen-bu* 15/ *chaogong* 3. (p.11235)

**Remark:** This record is also seen in the *Jiutangshu* [*Old Book of Tang*].

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(2) Tokharoi is in the Tarim Basin, Xinjiang, China today.

(3) *Xinluo* [Silla] is in the present-day Korean peninsula.

(4) *Lin-yi* [Camp] is in the present-day central part of Vietnam.

(5) *Shi-zi-guo* [Ceylon] is the present-day Sri Lanka.

7. In the seventh month of the fourth year [of the Kaiyuan reign] [between May 22-June 19, 716 CE], *Hei-mi-mo-li-su-li-man* [Amīr al-Muhminīn Sulaymān] of *Dashi-guo* [Arab Caliphate] dispatches his envoys to present a memorial [to the Tang throne], as well as to present one gold embroidered robe, one expensively packed jade, and one glass bottle. (It is also said that in the first year of the Kaiyuan reign [713 C.E], *Dashi* envoys present golden-flower ornaments and other local products.)

— *Cefu Yuangui* [*Archival Palace as Great Tortoise Oracle*], Scroll 971/*waichen-bu* [the ministry of local officials] 16/*chaogong* [Tribute] 4. (p.11237)

**Remark 1:** This record is also seen in the *Jiutangshu* [*Old Book of Tang*].

**Remark 2:** After this narration, in Scroll 974 of *Cefu Yuangui*, there is one more sentence, which says:

[The Emperor] grants the [leading] envoy [from *Dashi*] the title of the Supernumerary Commandant, [then] allows him to go back to his [alien] country.

8. In the sixth month of the seventh year [of the Kaiyuan reign] [between April 24-May 22, 719 CE], *Dashi-guo* [Arab Caliphate], *Tuhuohuo-guo* [Tokharoi], *Kang-guo* [Samakand],<sup>6</sup> and *Nan-Tianzhu-guo* [South India] dispatch their envoys to pay tribute [to the Tang court].

— *Cefu Yuangui*, Scroll 971/*waichen-bu* 16/*chaogong* 4. (p.11238)

9. In the third month of the twelfth year [of the Kaiyuan reign] [between January 27-February 24, 724 CE], *Dashi* [Arabia] dispatches its envoys to present steeds and dragon-brain perfume [borneol]<sup>7</sup>.

— *Cefu Yuangui*, Scroll 971/*waichen-bu* 16/*chaogong* 4. (p.11239)

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(6) *Kang-guo* [Samakand] is in the present-day Uzbekistan.

(7) Here it must refer to natural borneol resin.

10. (1) In the first month of the thirteenth year [of the Kaiyuan reign] [December 724 CE], *Dashi* dispatches a general *Su-li[-man]* [Suleiman] and others, thirteen people altogether, to come [to the Tang court] for the celebration of the New Year; they present their local products.

In the third month [of the thirteenth year of the Kaiyuan reign] [between January 27-February 25, 725 CE], *Dashi* dispatches its general *Su-li-man* [Suleiman] and others, thirteen people altogether, to present their local products. (It is said that they present steeds and woolen textiles.)

— *Cefu Yuangui*, Scroll 971/ *waichen-bu* 16/ *chaogong* 4. (p.11239)

- (2) On the *bing-wu* day of the first month of the thirteenth year [of the Kaiyuan reign] [on December 6, 724 CE], the King [Caliph] of *Dasghi-guo* dispatches an emir *Su-li[-man]* and others, totaling twelve people, to present [his] local products. [The Chinese Emperor] grants him the title of the *Guo-yi[-duwei]* [*Guoyi* Commandant]<sup>8</sup> and awards every [delegation] member a purple robe with silk brand, [then] allows them to go back to their [alien] country.

— *Cefu Yuangui*, Scroll 975/ *waichen-bu* 20/ *baoyio* 2. (p.11282)

**Remark 1:** The first paragraph of the Text (1) and Text (2) must describe a same historical event.

**Remark 2:** Scholars have been mistakenly thought that this matter (first paragraph) happened in 725 CE, however, the Chinese lunar calendar misled them, as “January of the thirteenth year of the Kaiyuan reign” is in December 724 CE.

Bai Shouyi argues that it is illogical for *Dashi* to pay a visit twice within three months, and that it must be a misprinting in the record. He argues that the second time must be one year later.

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(8) “*Guo-yi*” means “determination and fortitude.” *Guoyi* Commandant is “vice commandant (or, also called left or right commandant) of a military garrison (*fu*) during the Tang dynasty, roughly between 4 to 6 degree (four is higher) in the military system.

11. On the *xin-hai* day of the third month [of the sixteenth year of the Kaiyuan reign] [on January 27, 728 CE], a *Dashi* emir *Ti-bi-duo-lei* and others, eight people altogether, come to pay tribute. [The Emperor] grants him the title of Commandant, [then] allows them to go back to his [alien] country.

— *Cefu Yuangui* [*Archival Palace as Great Tortoise Oracle*], Scroll 975/ *waichen-bu* [the ministry of local officials] 20/ *baoyio* [bureaucratic promotion] 2. (p.11284)

12. In the *yi-wei* day of the ninth month of the seventeenth year [of the Kaiyuan reign] [on July 26, 729 CE], *Dashi* dispatches its envoys to pay tribute [to the Tang court]; [the Chinese Emperor] awards them one hundred rolls of silk, [then] allows him be back to his [alien] country.

— *Cefu Yuangui*, Scroll 971/ *waichen-bu*16/ *chaogong* 4. (p.11284)

13. (1) In the twelfth month [of the seventeenth year of the Kaiyuan reign] [between October 15-November 12, 729], the King [Caliph] of *Dasghi-guo* dispatches an emir *Mo-si-lan-da-gan* and others to pay tribute [to the Tang court].

— *Cefu Yuangui*, Scroll 971/ *waichen-bu*16/ *chaogong* 4. (p.11241)

(2) On the *gui-chou* day of the twelfth month of the seventeenth year [of the Kaiyuan reign] [on October 27, 729], the King [Caliph] of *Dasghi-guo* dispatches an emir *Mo-si-lan-da-gan* and others to pay a visit [to the Tang court] and present [his] local products. [The Chinese Emperor] grants him the title of the *Guo-yi[-duwei]* [*Guoyi* Commandant]. Every [delegation] member is rewarded with twenty rolls of silk, [then the Emperor] allows them to go back to their [alien] country.

— *Cefu Yuangui*, Scroll 975/ *waichen-bu* 20/ *baoyio* 2. (p.11286)

**Remark:** The above Text (1) and Text (2) must describe a same historical event.

14. On the *bing-shen* day [of the twelfth month of the twenty-ninth year of the Kaiyuan reign] [on October 28, 741 CE], *Dashi* emir *Sa-mi* comes to pay tribute. [The Emperor] grants him the title of the *Zuo-jinwu-wei* [Left Imperial Insignia Guard],<sup>9</sup> and favors him with a purple-robe with golden-band, [then] allows them to go back to their [alien] country.
- *Cefu Yuangui*, Scroll 975/ *waichen-bu* 20/ *baoyio* 2. (p.11288)
15. In the seventh month of the third year [of the Tianbao reign] [between May 22-June 19, 744 CE], *Dashi-guo*.....[other country names omitted here] dispatch their envoys to present good steeds [to the Tang court] and [other kinds of] treasures.
- *Cefu Yuangui*, Scroll 971/ *waichen-bu*16/ *chaogong* 4. (p.11243)
16. In the fifth month [of the fourth year of the Tianbao reign] [between March 26-April 23, 745 CE], *Dashi-guo* and *She-mo-guo*<sup>10</sup>.....dispatch their envoys to pay tribute [to the Tang court].
- *Cefu Yuangui*, Scroll 971/ *waichen-bu* 16/ *chaogong* 4. (p.11243)
17. In the fifth month [of the sixth year of the Tianbao reign] [between March 26-April 23, 747 CE], then King of *Dashi-guo* dispatches his envoys to present six leopards [to the Tang court]; the King of *Bosi-guo* [Persia] dispatches his envoys to present four leopards; and the King of the *Kang-guo* [Samarkand] dispatches his envoys to present horses.
- *Cefu Yuangui*, Scroll 971/ *waichen-bu* 16/ *chaogong* 4. (p.11244)
18. (1) In the twelfth month of the eleventh year [of the Tianbao reign] [on November 19, 752 CE], *Xie-duo-he-mi* of the Black-robed *Dashi*

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(9) Usually one each of the Left and Right. This is a distinguished unit of imperial bodyguard, normally commanded by a general.

(10) *She-mo-guo*: this translator is ignorant of the country. No source seems to give this information.

[Abbasid Caliphate]<sup>11</sup> dispatches his envoys to come to pay tribute [to the Tang court].

— *Cefu Yuangui*, Scroll 971/ *waichen-bu* 16/ *chaogong* 4. (p.11244)

- (2) On the *yi-mao* day of the twelfth month [of the eleventh year of the Tianbao reign] [November 19, 752 CE], *Xie-duo-he-mi* of the Black-robed *Dashi* [Abbasid Caliphate] dispatches his envoys to come to pay tribute [to the Tang court]. [The Emperor] grants him the title of the Supernumerary Commandant for *Zuo-jinwu-wei* [Left Imperial Insignia Guard], [then] allows them to go back to their [alien] country.

— *Cefu Yuangui*, Scroll 975/ *waichen-bu* 20/ *baoyio* 2. (p.11289)

**Remark 1:** These two texts seem to describe a same historical event

**Remark 2:** This is the first time that the Abbasid Caliph dispatch his envoys to China.

19. In the third month of the twelfth year [of the Tianbao reign] [between January 27-February 24, 753 CE], the Black-robed *Dashi* dispatches envoys to present its local products [to the Tang court]. In the fourth month, the Black-robed *Dashi* dispatches envoys to pay tribute [to the Tang court].

— *Cefu Yuangui*, Scroll 971/ *waichen-bu* 16/ *chaogong* 4. (p.11245)

20. On the *xin-hai* day of the seventh month of the twelfth year [of the Tianbao reign] [on July 12, 753 CE], the Black-robed *Dashi* dispatches an emir *Wang* and others, twenty-five people altogether, come to pay tribute [to the Tang court]. [The Emperor] grants him the title of Commandant,<sup>12</sup> and

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(11) This refers to the Arab Empire under the rule of Abbasid Caliphate; Chinese identify them through their attires.

(12) Who is in charge of five garrisons that constituted the hereditary elite corp of sixteen guards in the capital, ranking 4b in the military official position.

awards him a purple robe with gold brand and fish-band<sup>13</sup>, [then] allows them to go back to their [alien] country.

— *Cefu Yuangui*, Scroll 975/ *waichen-bu* 20/ *baoyio* 2. (p.11289)

**Remark:** the “*xin-hai*” day is in the [22<sup>nd</sup> of the] eighth month [according to Chinese lunar calendar], instead of in the seventh month as some scholars narrated. There must be a mistake.

21. In the twelfth month [of the twelfth year of the Tianbao reign] [between October 15-November 12, 753 CE], the Black-robed *Dahsi* presents thirty steeds. *Ge-luo-lu* [Qarluq] and *Shi-guo* [Tashkent] present their local products [to the Tang court].

— *Cefu Yuangui*, Scroll 971/ *waichen-bu* 16/ *chaogong* 4. (p.11245)

22. In the fourth month of the thirteenth year [of the Tianbao reign] [between February 25-March 25, 754 CE], the Black-robed *Dahsi-guo*, *Tu-huo-luo* [Tokharoi], and *Jüwei-guo*<sup>14</sup> dispatch their envoys to come to pay tribute [to the Tang court].

— *Cefu Yuangui*, Scroll 971/ *waichen-bu* 16/ *chaogong* 4. (p.11245)

23. In the seventh month of the fourteenth year [of the Tianbao reign] [between May 23-June 20, 755 CE], the Black-robed *Dahsi* dispatches its envoys to come [to the Tang court] to pay tribute.

— *Cefu Yuangui*, Scroll 971/ *waichen-bu* 16/ *chaogong* 4. (p.11245)

24. In the seventh month of the fifteenth year [of the Tianbao reign] [between May 23-June 20, 756 CE], the Black-robed *Dahsi* dispatches its envoys to come [to the Tang court] to pay tribute.

— *Cefu Yuangui*, Scroll 971/ *waichen-bu* 16/ *chaogong* 4. (p.11245)

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(13) A “fish-band” is a kind of brand that is decorated with gold and silver, which is a symbol for freely entering to the court. Officials with five or above degrees can have the fish-band.

(14) The regions of the Kunar River in present-day Afghanistan.

25. In the beginning of Emperor Suzong's Zhide reign [in the seventh month of the *bing-shen* year, *i.e.*, June 756 CE],<sup>15</sup>*Dashi-guo* [Arab Caliphate] dispatches its envoys to pay tribute [to the Tang court].

— *Cefu Yuangui*, Scroll 971/ *waichen-bu* 16/ *chaogong* 4. (p.11245)

26. On the *ren-shen* day of the fifth month of the first year of the Qianyuan reign [on March 29, 758 CE], The envoys from *Hui-he* [Uyghur Khanate], *Duo-yi-hai-a-bo* and others, totaling eighty people, and an emir from the Black-robed *Dashi* [Abbasid Caliphate], *Nao-wen* and others, totaling eight people, come at the same time to pay a visit [to the Tang court]; when they walk to the side entrance of the palace, [both delegations] argue who should be the first [to see the Emperor]. The interpreters and palace secretaries arrange them as left team and right team, and enter through the Eastern Gate and the Western Gate all at once. [After this,] *Wen-she-shi*<sup>16</sup> and the Black-robed *Dashi* envoy pay their visit [to the Chinese Emperor].

— *Cefu Yuangui*, Scroll 971/ *waichen-bu* 16/ *chaogong* 4. (p.11245)

**Remark:** This record, except the last sentence, is also seen in *Jiutangshu* [*Old Book of Tang*], Scroll 260, *Suzong benji* [Autobiography of Emperor Suzong].

27. In the twelfth month [of the first year of the Qianyuan reign] [between October 15-November 12, 758 CE], the envoy *Fu-xie-duo* from *Tuo-bo[-si-dan]* [Tabaristan]<sup>17</sup> country under the rule of the Black-robed [*Dashi*] will return to his native [alien] land, [the Emperor] gave a banquet to him.

— *Cefu Yuangui* [*Archival Palace as Great Tortoise Oracle*], Scroll 976/ *waichen-bu* [the ministry of local officials] 21/ *baoyio* [bureaucratic promotion] 3. (p.11293)

(15) Emperor Suzong ascended to the throne on the twelfth day of the seventh month of the *bing-shen* year, which is in line with June 2nd, 756 CE.

(16) *Wen-she-shi* must be the envoy's name of the Uyghur Khanate.

(17) This is a region of Iran today.

28. In the twelfth month [of the first year of the Shangyuan reign] [between October 14-November 11, 760 CE], [the Emperor] gives a banquet for hosting the envoy *Po-ye* from the White-robed [*Dashi*]<sup>18</sup>and his followers, altogether eighteen people, in the Yanying Hall [of the royal palace].

— *Cefu Yuangui*, Scroll 971/ *waichen-bu* 16/ *chaogong* 4. (p.11245)

29. On the *wu-shen* day of the fifth month [of the first year of the Baoying reign] [April 13, 760 CE]<sup>19</sup>, *Hui-he* [Uyghur Khanate], *Tu-bo* [Tibet], the Black-robed [*Dashi*]. . . . [other country names omitted here] dispatch their envoys to pay their tribute [to the Tang court]. In the twelfth month [of the same year] [between October 15-November 12, 760 CE], the Black-robed [*Dashi*] dispatches its envoys to pay tribute [to the Tang court].

— *Cefu Yuangui* [*Archival Palace as Great Tortoise Oracle*], Scroll 972/ *waichen-bu* [the ministry of local officials] 17/ *chaogong* 5 [Tributes 5]. (p.11248)

30. In the first month of the fourth year of the Dali reign [between November 12-December 10, 768 CE], *Zang-ke*<sup>20</sup>, *He-ling* [Kaling]<sup>21</sup>, the Black-robed [*Dashi*]. . . . dispatch their envoys to pay tribute [to the Tang court].

— *Cefu Yuangui*, Scroll 972/ *waichen-bu* 17/ *chaogong* 5. (P.11248)

31. In the twelfth month of the seventh year of the Dali reign, [between October 14-November 11, 772 CE], *Hui-he* [Uyghur Khanate], *Tu-bo* [Tibet], [the Black-robed] *Dashi*. . . . [rest of the nine country names omitted here] dispatch their envoys to pay tribute [to the Tang court].

— *Cefu Yuangui*, Scroll 972/ *waichen-bu* 17/ *chaogong* 5. (p.11248)

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(18) White-robed [*Dashi*] refers to Umayyad Caliphate here. However, the Caliphate had perished by this time. The envoys are from the survived Khanate in present-day Spain.

(19) This translator argues that the “*wu-shen* day” should be “*wu-chen* day,” which is on April 13, 760 CE. because there is no “*wu-shen* day” in the fifth month in this year.

(20) *Zang-ke* is in the present Wujiang Revier basins of Guizhou province South China.

(21) *He-ling* [Karling] is in Java, in the present-day, it belongs to Indonesia.

32. In the seventh month [of the ninth year of the Dali reign] [between May 23-June 20, 774 CE], the Black-robed *Dashi* and *To-bo* dispatch their envoys to pay tribute [to the Tang court].
- *Cefu Yuangui*, Scroll 972/ *waichen-bu* 17/ *chaogong* 5. (p.11249)
33. In the first month of the seventh year of Emperor Dezong's Zhenyuan reign [between November 13-December 11, 790 CE], the Black-robed *Dashi*.....dispatches its envoys to pay tribute [to the Tang court].
- *Cefu Yuangui*, Scroll 972/ *waichen-bu* 17/ *chaogong* 5. (p.11249)
34. On the *ding-mao* day of the ninth month of the fourteenth year of Zhenyuan reign [on July 31, 798 CE], [the Emperor grants] to give the title of Commandant to the envoys from *Dashi*, *Han-cuo*, *Wu-ji*, and *Sha-bi*; [then] allows them to go back to their [alien] country.
- *Cefu Yuangui* [*Archival Palace as Great Tortoise Oracle*], Scroll 976/ *waichen-bu* [the ministry of local officials] 21/ *baoyio* [bureaucratic promotion] 3. (p.11298)

#### IV. Translation of Three More Texts from Other Contemporary Historical Books

1. On the *gui-si* day of the ninth month of the first year of the Qianyuan reign [on July 27, 758 CE], [the local officials of] Guangzhou [Prefecture] submit a memorial to the throne that the strong troops from *Dashi-guo* and *Bosi-guo* [Arabia and Persia] attack the city [of Guangzhou]. The Perfect Wei Li, seeing the [dangerous] conditions, gives up the city and flees.
- Liu Xun et al, ed., *Jiutangshu* [*Old Book of Tang*], Scroll 10, *Suzong benji* [Biography of Emperor Suzong].
2. In the third month [of the first year of Empress Wu Zetian's Wansui-Tongtian reign] [between January 27-February 24, 696 CE], *Dashi* asks to

present lions [to the Tang court], [the Prime Minister] Yao Shou submits a memorial to the Empress stating “Lions eat meats [as food]. It is a far distance to transport them here, and it is difficult to prepare [enough] meats; so, this is a difficult and expensive job. Your Majesty [even] does not keep eagles and dogs, and [orders to] stop fishing and hunting; how can you treat yourself in a thrifty manner but be so spendthrift with such animals?” The Empress then refuses the requirement [for *Dashi*’s presenting lions].

— Sima Guang et al., ed., *Zizhi tongjian* [*Comprehensive Mirror for Aid in Government*], Scroll 205, *Tang-ji* [Biographies of the Tang], 21.

3. (In the sixteenth year of the Zhenyuan reign [800 CE]), *To-bo* [Tibet] is afraid that Tang [Empire] and Nanzhao [Kingdom] will join forces [to fight against it], so it dares not to covet Nanzhao. Wei Gao orders Wu Mian to halt his troops in Xizhou and to strongly defend the place; even inside the territory of Nanzhao, Wu’s troops must strongly garrison [, too]. *To-bo* learns the lessons of many failures in field battles [with Tang dynasty], [so, this time, it changes its strategy and] stationed its troops in three places along the Lushui River, and dispatches *Wang-re* to coax all the [local] tribes along the River to build the city of Xishe, which makes Xishe a strong fortress of the *Tu-bo*. [Some] tribal chieftains make mischief between [officials of] Nanzhao and [General] Wei Gao’s subordinate official *Du-pi-luo* to get them to fight against one another. In the spring of the Zhenyuan reign [801 CE], Wei Gao [leads his troops] across the River and attacks the enemy’s camps so that five hundred enemy soldiers are killed.

[General] Luo Bao is defending the Luwei Mount [at the time], while at the same time [*Du-pi-luo* is waiting for him [to attack]. When [a new] battle breaks out, Lu is defeated. This time, the soldiers from *Kang*[-country, *i.e.*, Samarkand], the Black-robed *Dashi* [Abbasid Caliphate] and other countries, as well as the chieftains of *Tu-bo*, have all surrendered. Twenty thousand soldiers [of *Du-pi-luo*] were captured. [After this, General Luo

Bao] allies with *Gui-zhu* [titles for the local tribes] and [finally] defeats *Tu-bo* in the west bank of the Lushui River.

Song Qi, Ouyangxiu, et al., ed. *Xintangshu* [New Book of Tang], Scroll 222, Part 1, *Nanzhao zhuan* [Treatise for Nanzhao].

**Remark:** “the soldiers from *Kang*[-country, *i.e.*, Samarkand], the Black-robed *Dashi* [Abbasid Caliphate] and other countries” refers to the captured soldiers by the Tang dynasty; the captured soldiers were forced into the war in South China on the Tang’s side.

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**VI. Table:**

**The Tang Emperors and Their Reign Titles and Time Periods**

Emperor	Total Ruling Periods (Common Era)	Reign Title (as appeared in the Text Translations)	Such Reign Title's Period (CE)
Emperor Gaozu	618-626	Yonghui reign	650-655
Emperor Taizong	627-649	Yongchun reign	682
Emperor Gaozong	650-683		
Empress Zetian	684-704	Wansui-Tongtian reign Chang'an reign	696 701-704
Emperor Zhongzong	705-709		
Emperor Ruizong	710-712	Jinglong reign	710-711
Emperor Xuanzong (Li Longji)	712-756	Kaiyuan reign Tianbao reign	713-741 742-756
Emperor Suzong	756-762	Zhide reign Qianyuan reign shangyuan reign Baoying reign	756-757 758-759 760-761 762
Emperor Daizong	763-779	Dali reign	766-779
Emperor Dezong	780-805	Zhenyuan reign	785-805
Emperor Shunzong	805		
Emperor Xianzong	806-820		
Emperor Muzong	821-824		
Emperor Jingzong	825-826		
Emperor Wenzong	827-840		
Emperor Wuzong	841-846		
Emperor Xuanzongh (Li Chen)	847-859		
Emperor Yizong	860-873		
Emperor Xizong	874-888		
Emperor Zhaozong	889-904		
Emperor Aizong	904-907		

**Remark:** the emperors who are not mentioned in the above translations are not detailed here.



### About the Author

**WAN Lei** is a PhD in history from the University of Malaya and a member of the Chinese National Association for Huiological Studies. He published a monograph, *Identity and Struggles: The Hui Minority in Modern China*, in Istanbul 2012. He also published many academic articles in English and Chinese concerning Hui minority and Islamic studies. He has been a Professor at Xingyang Agriculture and Forestry University, China. He was an Associate Professor at Fatih University, Turkey and Lecturer at some of Chinese and Malaysian higher institutions. Dr. Wan Lei is at present a senior research fellow at King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies, Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.



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