Al-Ṣīn and Dashi: How the Arabs and the Chinese Named Each Other

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Abstract

This article asks when, where, and through whom the Arabs came to call China *al-Ṣīn* and the Chinese came to call the Arabs Dashi 大食. It argues that each name first designated the other side's state as it was met at a frontier, and that each came through third parties in a form taken from an Iranian language, such as Persian, Sogdian, or Parthian. In the Arabic poems of 711 to 717 on the conquests in Central Asia and Sind, *al-Ṣīn* most likely named the Tang realm and its protectorates on the frontier of Ferghana and Kashgar; in records that begin with an embassy of 651, Chinese writers used Dashi for the caliph's state and, from the 690s, its frontier armies. A search of early Arabic texts dates the first surviving verse with *al-Ṣīn* to 711 to 715. Earlier frontier verse names the region's places about as often but never names *al-Ṣīn*; the later verse names it only twice, so this absence does not show that the name was unknown before 711. Which speakers passed on either name remains open.

Keywords: al-Ṣīn; Dashi; China; Arabs; Tang dynasty; Umayyad caliphate; Qutayba ibn Muslim; Ferghana; Sogdian; Middle Persian; tāzīg; Yijing; early Arabic poetry; OpenITI; Silk Road

Arabic writers have called China *al-Ṣīn* since the Umayyad caliphate (661 to 750), and writers of the Tang dynasty (618 to 907) called the Arabs Dashi 大食. Both names were borrowed. This article asks when, where, and through whom the Arabs came to call China *al-Ṣīn* and the Chinese came to call the Arabs Dashi: which are the first dated uses of each name, what each first referred to, and which language each came through.

My answer is that both names began as names for a state that the borrowers met on a frontier, and both arrived secondhand, in Iranian forms. Iranian-speaking peoples, among them Persians and Sogdians (the merchant people of Samarkand and Bukhara), lived between the Arabs and the Chinese, and both names took Iranian forms, though which speakers passed them on remains open.

The French scholar Paul Pelliot traced both names to Persian. *Al-Ṣīn* comes from Persian *Čīn*, with its opening *ch* written with the Arabic letter ṣād. Dashi, like the earlier form Duoshi 多氏 used by the Buddhist monk Yijing, comes from the Persian word for an Arab, *tāzī*.[1] C. E. Bosworth adds that *al-Ṣīn* appears in Arabic geography and history from Ibn Khurradadhbih, in the mid-ninth century, onward.[2] No one has checked either name systematically against dated texts, and the two are usually studied apart. Here I search a large collection of early Arabic texts for the Arabic name and compare the results with the Chinese record.

Many early uses survive only in books written later. I date a poem by the event it describes only when its words fix that date, as when it praises a ruler as still alive; otherwise I date it by the poet's death, where the poem is securely his, or by its transmitter. Embassies and campaigns show that the two sides were in contact, but they do not tell us when either name was first used.

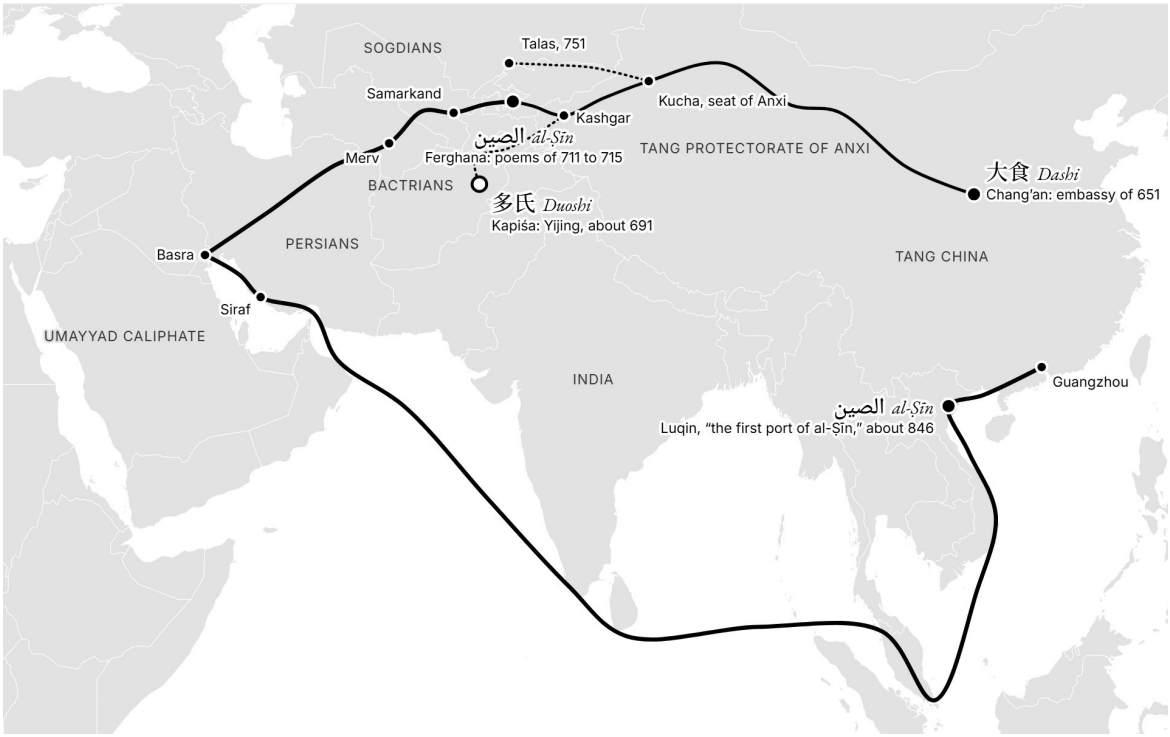


Figure 1. Where the two names met. Arab campaigns and the sea road; Tang routes and garrisons (dashed line); Dotted: the Talas campaign and the road through Kapiśa. Simplified routes, about 650 to 850. The Arab armies reached Ferghana by 715, and a Tang-led force fought there that December; Tang garrisons held Kashgar and the Tarim Basin from Kucha. The lands between the caliphate and the Tang were Iranian-speaking. Ibn Khurradadhbih traced the sea road to China about 846.

Before the Arabs

The name for China reached western Asia before Islam in Iranian forms, several with the suffix *-stān*, "land of." The oldest are Sogdian: the Ancient Letters, written about 313 to 314 by Sogdian merchants in northern China, call the Chinese *cyn* and China *cynstn*.[3] Around 550 the Greek writer Kosmas Indikopleustes wrote of *Tzinista*, the silk country, a form that Pelliot judged "certainly Iranian."[4] Armenian took the name from Persian as *Čenastan*. From such Armenian words, Heinrich Hübschmann and then Pelliot reconstructed the Middle Persian (the Persian of the Sasanian empire) forms *Čēn* and *Čēnastān*.[5] No Persian text from before the Arab conquest records them, so they remain reconstructions worked back from the Armenian.

The first Arabic uses

I searched OpenITI, a large open digital library of premodern Arabic texts, for *al-Ṣīn*, the adjective *ṣīnī*, "Chinese," and the long form *Ṣīnistān*. The search covered every text in OpenITI

by an author who died by 150 AH (767 CE; AH counts years from the Hijra of 622), and seventeen later compilations that preserve early verse and reports: 11.6 million words in all. It found 192 occurrences, and I read each one in context. I can supply the list of every occurrence and the dated verse on request.[6]

The earliest uses that can be dated are verses of 711 to 717 on the campaigns of the Arab commanders Qutayba ibn Muslim in Transoxania (the lands beyond the Oxus River, around Bukhara and Samarkand) and Muhammad ibn al-Qasim in Sind, the lower Indus valley (table 1).[7]

To see whether the name's absence before 711 means anything, I compared poems on the same subject before and after. The historians al-Tabari, al-Baladhuri, Ibn Aʿtham, and Khalifa ibn Khayyat quote verse on the eastern frontier, from Khurasan and Transoxania to Sind, for events of 31 to 125 AH (651 to 743). I divided this verse at 92 AH (710 to 711), the year in which the dated uses begin. The 3,673 words before 92 AH name the frontier's peoples and places, such as Samarkand, Khurasan, and the Turks, 20 times. The 5,082 words from 92 AH name them 29 times, about as often for their length. Within this sample, *al-Ṣīn* occurs twice in the later verse, in Sawada's and al-Tirimmah's lines, and never in the earlier.[8]

So the first surviving verse to use the name dates from 711 to 715. Because the name is rare even in the later verse, its absence from the earlier verse does not show that it was unknown before 711, and the borrowing may be earlier. The verse reached the compilers through *rāwī*s, reciters who could revise it, so the search describes the poetry as it was transmitted.[9]

What the first al-Ṣīn named

In the poems on the conquests, *al-Ṣīn* most likely named the Tang realm and its protectorates, the military commands through which the Tang oversaw Central Asian kingdoms, as the Arabs met them on the frontier of Ferghana and Kashgar. The princes of Ferghana, in H. A. R. Gibb's account, regarded themselves as vassals of China, and Kashgar was one of the Four Garrisons of the Tang protectorate of Anxi. In December 715, the Song chronicle *Zizhi tongjian* reports, a Tang-led army from Kucha drove out a king of Ferghana whom Tibet and the Dashi had installed, a few months after Qutayba died there.[10]

The verses on Qutayba's death put it in al-Ṣīn. Al-Tirimmah calls the field where he fell "the meadow of al-Ṣīn," and Ibn Jumana places his grave "in *Ṣīnistān*." The scholar Ibn Qutayba (died 889), no relation to the commander, quotes the earlier reporter Abu l-Yaqzan: the grave is in Ferghana, and the poet counted it as part of al-Ṣīn.[11] The verses fit a land whose king looked to the Tang and where a Tang-led force fought that winter, though a death "in al-Ṣīn" could also be a poet's way of saying the end of the world, and Abu l-Yaqzan's remark fits either reading.

In al-Mada'ini's account, which al-Tabari quotes and which shows the usage of the early ninth century, Kashgar is "the nearest of the cities of al-Ṣīn," and the delegation that Sawada's verse describes goes before "the king of al-Ṣīn," the Tang emperor.[12] The verses on the death and the grave favor this narrower reading over Gibb's view of Ṣīn as a loose term for the Far East, and the other dated verses fit either.[13]

The sea road enters the record later. The geographer Ibn Khurradadhbih, writing from about 846, traces the sea route from Basra to Luqin, "the first port of al-Ṣīn," in the Tang

protectorate of Annan near modern Hanoi, and on to Guangzhou.[14] The *Accounts of China and India* (851 or 852) says that most of the China ships load at Siraf, on the Persian Gulf.[15] On this reading, al-Ṣīn named the Tang realm where outsiders met it: the garrison frontier of Central Asia in the 710s and the southern ports in the ninth century.

From which Iranian speakers?

By 715 Jarir could use *Ṣīnistān* in poems for al-Hajjaj in Iraq and the caliph al-Walid I in Syria and expect to be understood. Arabs had lived among Iranian speakers for two generations. Arab armies entered Khurasan in 650 to 651, and about 50,000 men of Basra and Kufa settled there with their families in 671. In Iraq, by Ibn al-Muqaffa"s account, Persian had been the language of the court and of al-Mada'in, the old Persian capital.[16] Persians may also have known of China by sea before Islam, though the evidence places them mainly in the ports of India and Sri Lanka, and the only witness to a name on that route is the Greek of Kosmas.[17] The Arabs could have learned the name in Khurasan or in Iraq, by land or by sea.

Three Iranian languages could have passed it on. Sogdian has the name in the Ancient Letters and in a letter from the Sogdian archive found at Mount Mugh, in today's Tajikistan, written before 722, that names the Chinese among arriving troops.[18] Persian has it before Islam only in the reconstructed forms, and I have found no Middle Persian document of the first Islamic century that names China. Parthian, the Iranian language of the Parthian homeland in Khurasan, had *Čīnestān*,[19] though scholars disagree on whether Parthian was still spoken in seventh-century Khurasan.[20]

The Arabic form does not decide among them. Arabic had no *ē*, so Ṣīn fits a Persian *Čēn* as well as *Čīn*, and Sogdian *cyn* can stand for either.[21] The Middle Persian, Manichaean (the script of the followers of Mani), and Sogdian scripts all wrote the sound *ch* with the same old Aramaic letter from which Arabic ṣād descends, so a scribe who knew any of them could have spelled the name with ṣād by habit.[22]

The setting favors Sogdian and Persian. The verses on Qutayba place al-Ṣīn on the Ferghana frontier, among Sogdians. But Jarir and al-Farazdaq made their names in Iraq, and the Arabic reports of the conquest, as Étienne de la Vaissière observes, come from Iran, where Sogdian merchants were few.[23] Sogdian is the best attested at the time and place of the first uses, perhaps only because the Mount Mugh archive survived. A dated Middle Persian *Čēn* or *Čīn* from before 711 would give Persian equal standing.

How the Chinese named the Arabs

Dashi 大食 comes from the Iranian word for an Arab, *tāzīg*, usually traced to the Arab tribe of Tayyi'.[24] The Iranian word is older than the Chinese record. Armenian borrowed it as *Tačik*, which Hübschmann cited from texts older than Islam, and the Armenian *History* attributed to Sebeos, written about 655, uses it in its narrative of 590 and for the Arab army in a treaty of 652 or 653.[25] It then appears in Middle Persian, as *tāzīgān*, "Arabs," in a document of 691 to about 695,[26] in Sogdian, as *t'zyk*, in a letter of 712 to 715, and in a Bactrian contract of 747.[27]

The Chinese record opens with embassies. The *Cefu yuangui*, an imperial encyclopedia compiled in 1013 from earlier records, enters under 651 that "the country of Dashi for the first time sent envoys with tribute," and Hyunhee Park counts thirty-three Arab embassies to the

Tang between 651 and 750 in the official histories.[28] The oldest surviving account of the embassy is in the *Tongdian*, which Du You finished in 801; it says of the Dashi that "their king is surnamed Dashi."[29] So the Chinese characters for the embassy of 651 survive only from 801. The *Old Tang History*, compiled in 945, dates the embassy to 25 August 651 and names the ruler with a transcription of *amīr al-muʾminīn*, Commander of the Faithful.[30]

The earliest dated Chinese name for the Arabs comes from Yijing. Writing about 691 of a monk who could not get home from India, he says that the Duoshi 多氏 held the road through Kapiśa, in eastern Afghanistan, and that it was hard to pass.[31] A note in the text says that the Duoshi are the Dashi, but who wrote the note is uncertain.[32] The Korean monk Hyecho, who reached Anxi, in the Tarim basin, in December 727, writes Dashi with different characters, 大寔, in the Dunhuang manuscript of his account.[33]

As pronounced in the Chinese of the time (Middle Chinese), 大食 ends in *-k* and could stand for Persian *tāzīg* or Sogdian *tāžīk*, while Yijing's 多氏 ends in a vowel and would fit Pelliot's *tāzī*.[34] Chinese transcribers often left a final *-k* unwritten, so the endings cannot show which Iranian language supplied the name.[35] Yijing and Hyecho both traveled in India, so the name could also have reached them through speakers of Indian languages, though the earliest dated Indian form I have found, *Tājjika*, is in a grant of 736 as V. V. Mirashi restores it.[36]

What Dashi first named

Chinese writers first used Dashi for the caliph's state and, from the 690s, for its armies on the frontier. Since the *Tongdian* makes Dashi the king's surname, one name served for the ruling house and the realm. In 719 the king of Samarkand wrote to the Tang court that for six years "the Dashi commander-in-chief, the amīr Qutayba," had fought his country,[37] and about 727 Hyecho found Dashi troops garrisoning Tokharistan, in northern Afghanistan.[38] For the campaign of 751 that ended at the Talas River, in Central Asia, the *Old Tang History* records that the Tang general Gao Xianzhi fought the Dashi and was routed.[39] Only later do the Tang histories and the *Zizhi tongjian* place the Dashi at the ports, beside Persia, in the attack on Guangzhou in 758 and among the foreign merchants killed at Yangzhou in 760.[40]

The two names through time

Dated uses of a name for China or for the Arabs. Rows marked as contact events show that the two sides were in contact but do not tell us when either name was first used.

Table 1. Dated uses of the name and related events, by line.

Year	Line	Event
221 BCE	Qin	Qin unifies China. Its name is the most likely root of Cīna and al-Ṣīn.
313 to 314	China in Iranian	Sogdian Ancient Letter 2 calls the Chinese *cyn* and China *cynstn*.
651	The Arabs in Chinese	The first embassy of the Dashi 大食, dated by the *Old Tang History* to 25 August 651. *Chinese record*
About 691	The Arabs in Chinese	Yijing writes that the road through Kapiśa is held by the Duoshi 多氏. *Chinese record*

Year	Line	Event
691 to about 695	The Arabs in Iranian	A Middle Persian document calls the Arabs *tāzīgān*.
By 714	China in Arabic	Jarir, praising al-Ḥajjaj, uses بصين استان, "in *Ṣīnistān*"; Ibn Habib's ninth-century commentary connects the verse with al-Ḥajjaj's promise to his generals in Sind and Khurasan.
712 to 715	The Arabs in Iranian	A Sogdian letter from Mount Mugh writes *t'zyk* for the Arabs.
December 715	The Arabs in Chinese	After Qutayba's death, a Tang-led force drives out the king that Tibet and the Dashi 大食 had set up in Ferghana. *Chinese record*
851 or 852	China in Arabic	The *Accounts of China and India*: most of the China ships load at Siraf.

Conclusion

The Arabic and the Chinese names for each other followed the same course. Each first named a state that the borrowers met at a frontier. For the Arab poets of 711 to 717, *al-Ṣīn* was most likely the Tang realm and its protectorates on the frontier of Ferghana and Kashgar. For Chinese writers from the embassy of 651, Dashi was the caliph's state and, from the 690s, its armies. Each reached its borrowers in an Iranian form, through third parties. On both sides the dated record places the name at a land frontier before it places it at the ports, perhaps only because the earliest texts are poems on campaigns and records of embassies and wars.

My search dates the first surviving Arabic verse with *al-Ṣīn* to 711 to 715, though the borrowing may be earlier. Which speakers passed on either name remains open. For *al-Ṣīn* the setting favors Sogdian and Persian, and Sogdian is the best attested, but the Arabic spelling fits Sogdian, Persian, and Parthian alike. The Chinese forms of Dashi cannot show which Iranian form they stand for. A dated Middle Persian *Čēn* or *Čīn* from before 711 would give Persian equal standing with Sogdian.

Notes

1. Paul Pelliot, *Notes on Marco Polo*, 3 vols. (Imprimerie Nationale, 1959-1973), 1:264-278 ("Cin"), with *al-Ṣīn* at 270, https://dsr.nii.ac.jp/toyobunko/III-2-F-c-104/V-1/page-hr/0280.html.en; and Pelliot, *Notes on Marco Polo*, 1:44-45 ("Arabie"), https://dsr.nii.ac.jp/toyobunko/III-2-F-c-104/V-1/page-hr/0060.html.en.

2. C. E. Bosworth, "al-Ṣīn, 1. The Name," in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., vol. 9 (Brill, 1997), 616-617, https://doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_1080.

3. For the date, the writers, and the forms, see Samuel N. C. Lieu, "From Qin (Ch'in) to Cathay: Names for China and the Chinese on the Silk Road," *The Medieval History Journal* 27, no. 1 (2024): 22-24 and nn. 21-23, https://www.repository.cam.ac.uk/bitstreams/0cf8e9f1-038a-4ce7-a2c8-de20c5f1af5e/download#page=11; and for Henning's readings, W. B. Henning, "The Date of the Sogdian Ancient Letters," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 12, nos. 3-4 (1948): 604-605, 615 and n. 2, https://archive.org/details/dli.calcutta.05152/page/n626/mode/1up. The forms are in Letter 2, lines 17 and 30.

4. For the Greek text, see Kosmas Indikopleustes, *The Christian Topography of Cosmas Indicopleustes*, ed. E. O. Winstedt (Cambridge University Press, 1909), 68 (bk. 2) and 322 (bk. 11), https://archive.org/details/christiantopogra00cosmuoft/page/68/mode/1up; on the author and the date, McCrindle's introduction in Kosmas Indikopleustes, *The Christian Topography of Cosmas, an Egyptian Monk*, trans. J. W. McCrindle (London: Hakluyt Society, 1897), iv, x, https://archive.org/details/christiantopogra00cosm/page/n19/mode/1up; and on the form, Pelliot, *Notes on Marco Polo*, 1:268, https://dsr.nii.ac.jp/toyobunko/III-2-F-c-104/V-1/page-hr/0284.html.en.

5. For entry 37 of Anania Shirakatsi's *Geography*, see Robert Bedrosian, "China and the Chinese according to 5-13th Century Classical Armenian Sources," *Armenian Review* 34, no. 1 (1981): 17-24, https://archive.org/details/ChinaAndTheChineseAccordingTo5-13thCenturyClassicalArmenianSources/page/n0/mode/1up; for the Armenian forms, which Hübschmann files among the Persian names, Heinrich Hübschmann, *Armenische Grammatik*, pt. 1, *Armenische Etymologie* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1897), 49, no. 101, https://archive.org/details/ArmenischeGrammatik/page/n72/mode/1up; and for Pelliot's inference, Pelliot, *Notes on Marco Polo*, 1:269-270, https://dsr.nii.ac.jp/toyobunko/III-2-F-c-104/V-1/page-hr/0285.html.en.

6. The release searched is 2025.1.9: Lorenz Nigst et al., *OpenITI: A Machine-Readable Corpus of Islamicate Texts*, version 2025.1.9 (Zenodo, December 30, 2025), https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17767721. The word counts are those given by OpenITI.

7. For Jarir's two poems, see Jarir, *Dīwān Jarīr bi-sharḥ Muḥammad ibn Ḥabīb*, ed. Nuʿman Muhammad Amin Taha, 3rd ed., 2 vols. (Dar al-Maʿarif, [1986]), 1:243-245 (poem 34, to al-Hajjaj, v. 26) and 2:684-686 (to al-Walid I, v. 24); for Sawada, al-Tabari, *Taʾrīkh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk*, published as *Annales quos scripsit Abu Djafar Mohammed ibn Djarir at-Tabari*, ed. M. J. de Goeje et al., 15 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 1879-1901), ser. 2, 1279, https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.361124/page/n691/mode/1up; for al-Farazdaq on Qutayba, *The Naḳāʾiḍ of Jarīr and al-Farazdaḳ*, ed. A. A. Bevan, vol. 1 (Brill, 1905), 342 (heading of no. 51), 348 (v. 33) and 376 (v. 77), https://archive.org/details/nakaidofjariralf01jarr/page/n600/mode/1up; for Ibn Jumana, al-Baladhuri, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, published as *Liber expugnationis regionum*, ed. M. J. de Goeje (Leiden: Brill, 1866), 204, https://archive.org/details/liberexpugnation00bald/page/n480/mode/1up; for al-Tirimmah's verse, al-Tirimmah, *Dīwān al-Ṭirimmāḥ*, ed. ʿIzzat Hasan, 2nd ed. (Dar al-Sharq al-ʿArabi, 1414/1994), 163 (poem 14, v. 5); al-Tabari, *Taʾrīkh*, ser. 2, 1302, https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.361124/page/n714/mode/1up; and for the verse to Yazid II, al-Farazdaq, *Dīwān*, published as *Divan de Férazdak: Récits de Mohammed-ben-Habib d'après Ibn-el-Arabi*, ed. and trans. R. Boucher (Paris, 1870), 50-51 (Arabic text), https://archive.org/details/divandefrazdak01farauoft/page/n428/mode/1up. Boucher heads al-Farazdaq's poem as praise of Yazid ibn ʿAbd al-Malik, whose mother was ʿAtika.

8. For Ibn Jumana's lines (table 1), see al-Baladhuri, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 204, https://archive.org/details/liberexpugnation00bald/page/n480/mode/1up. They stand in al-Baladhuri's section on Armenia, so they fall outside the verse chosen for the comparison; with them, the verse from 92 would have four uses of *al-Ṣīn*.

9. On the *rāwī*s and the sources of variants, see Gregor Schoeler, *The Oral and the Written in Early Islam*, trans. Uwe Vagelpohl, ed. James E. Montgomery (Routledge, 2006), 42, 92 and 101-104, https://openlibrary.org/works/OL5837896W; and on later reshaping and genuine survivals in the preserved poetry, Peter Webb, "Making War Ethnic: Arab-Persian Identities and Conflict on the Euphrates Frontier," in *War and Collective Identities in the Middle Ages: East, West, and Beyond*, ed. Yannis Stouraitis (Arc Humanities Press, 2023), 35, https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3645960.

10. On Ferghana, see H. A. R. Gibb, "The Arab Invasion of Kashgar in A.D. 715," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies* 2, no. 3 (1922): 467-468, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0041977X00102320; on the Four Garrisons, Édouard Chavannes, *Documents sur les Tou-kiue (Turcs) occidentaux* (Académie impériale des sciences, 1903), 45n4 and 113n2, https://archive.org/details/india.history.resource.92002/page/n52/mode/1up; for December 715, Sima Guang, *Zizhi tongjian*, Wenyuange *Siku quanshu* ed., juan 211, Kaiyuan 3 (715), eleventh month, 23a-24a, https://archive.org/details/06057167.cn/page/n44/mode/1up; translated in Chavannes, *Documents sur les Tou-kiue*, 148-149n3 and 291, https://archive.org/details/india.history.resource.92002/page/n155/mode/1up; and for the date of Qutayba's death and the sequence, Gibb, "Arab Invasion of Kashgar," 472-473, https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.70626/page/n482/mode/1up. The *Zizhi tongjian* reads 吐蕃與大食共立阿了達為王.

11. For al-Tirimmah, see al-Tabari, *Ta'rīkh*, ser. 2, 1302, https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.361124/page/n714/mode/1up; with Hasan's notes in al-Tirimmah, *Dīwān*, 163; for Ibn Jumana, al-Baladhuri, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 204, https://archive.org/details/liberexpugnation00bald/page/n480/mode/1up; for Ferghana, Gibb, "Arab Invasion of Kashgar," 471, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0041977X00102320; and for Abu l-Yaqzan, Ibn Qutayba, *Kitāb al-Maʿārif*, published as *Ibn Coteiba's Handbuch der Geschichte*, ed. Ferdinand Wüstenfeld (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1850), 221, https://archive.org/details/handbuchdergesch00ibnquoft/page/n157/mode/1up. Abu l-Yaqzan's words are قبر قتيبة بفرغانة فجعله الشاعر من الصين.

12. Al-Tabari, *Ta'rīkh*, ser. 2, 1276-1279, https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.361124/page/n688/mode/1up; for Sawada's verse, al-Tabari, *Ta'rīkh*, ser. 2, 1279, https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.361124/page/n691/mode/1up.

13. For al-Farazdaq, see Bevan, *Naḳā'iḍ*, 348 and 376, https://archive.org/details/nakaidofjariralf01jarr/page/n594/mode/1up; al-Farazdaq, *Dīwān*, 50, https://archive.org/details/divandefrazdak01farauoft/page/n428/mode/1up; Jarir, *Dīwān*, 1:245 and 2:686; and for the loose term, H. A. R. Gibb, *The Arab Conquests in Central Asia*, James G. Forlong Fund 2 (Royal Asiatic Society, 1923), 53, https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.281571/page/n58/mode/1up.

14. For de Goeje's dating of the first version, see his preface in Ibn Khurradadhbih, *Kitāb al-Masālik wa-l-mamālik*, ed. and trans. M. J. de Goeje, Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum 6 (Leiden: Brill, 1889), xx, https://archive.org/details/bibliothecageogr06goej/page/n536/mode/1up; for the route and the ports, Ibn Khurradadhbih, *Kitāb al-Masālik*, 61-62 and 69 (Arabic text), 42 and 49 (French trans.), https://archive.org/details/bibliothecageogr06goej/page/n68/mode/1up; on Khanfu, Pelliot, *Notes on Marco Polo*, 1:275, https://dsr.nii.ac.jp/toyobunko/III-2-F-c-104/V-1/page-hr/0291.html.en; for Annan, *Jiu Tangshu* [Old Tang history], juan 41, "Dili zhi," 94a (Zhonghua shuju ed., 41.1749), https://archive.org/details/06058973.cn/page/n188/mode/1up; and for Luqin as Hanoi, Friedrich Hirth and W. W. Rockhill, trans., *Chau Ju-kua: His Work on the Chinese and Arab Trade in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries, Entitled Chu-fan-chï* (Imperial Academy of Sciences, 1911), 22n1, https://archive.org/details/chaujukuahiswork00chauuoft/page/n35/mode/1up.

15. For the date, see Abu Zayd al-Sirafi, book 2 of *Akhbār al-Ṣīn wa-l-Hind*, in *Relation des voyages faits par les Arabes et les Persans dans l'Inde et à la Chine dans le IXe siècle de l'ère chrétienne*, ed. and trans. J. T. Reinaud, vol. 1 (Paris, 1845), 61-62, https://archive.org/details/bub_gb_yrM05nEuRmcC/page/n246/mode/1up; and for the China ships, *Akhbār al-Ṣīn wa-l-Hind*, book 1, in *Relation des voyages faits par les Arabes et les Persans dans l'Inde et à la Chine dans le IXe siècle de l'ère chrétienne*, ed. and trans. J. T. Reinaud, vol. 1 (Paris, 1845), 13-15, https://archive.org/details/bub_gb_yrM05nEuRmcC/page/n198/mode/1up. Page references to the *Accounts* are to Reinaud's edition.

16. Al-Baladhuri, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 403, 405 and 410, https://archive.org/details/liberexpugnation00bald/page/n281/mode/1up; al-Tabari, *Ta'rīkh*, ser. 2, 156, https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.361103/page/n158/mode/1up; and for Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, Gilbert Lazard, "Darī," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, vol. 7, fasc. 1 (1994): 34-35, https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/dari/. Lazard gives Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's notice on the languages of Iran as Ibn al-Nadim and later authors report it.

17. Winstedt, *Christian Topography*, 322-323 (bk. 11), https://archive.org/details/christiantopogra00cosmuoft/page/n337/mode/1up; Winstedt, *Christian Topography*, 69 (bk. 2), https://archive.org/details/christiantopogra00cosmuoft/page/n84/mode/1up; in English, Kosmas Indikopleustes, *Christian Topography*, 365-368, https://archive.org/details/christiantopogra00cosm/page/n408/mode/1up; for the majority view, David Whitehouse and Andrew Williamson, "Sasanian Maritime Trade," *Iran* 11 (1973): 45-49, https://doi.org/10.2307/4300483; and for the models, Seth M. N. Priestman, *Ceramic Exchange and the Indian Ocean Economy (AD 400-1275)*, 2 vols., British Museum Research Publication 223 (British Museum, 2021), 1:11, https://doi.org/10.48582/ceramicexchange_vol1.

18. For document B-17 (often written B-17), recto lines 12-13, see V. A. Livshits, *Sogdiiskie dokumenty s gory Mug*, vyp. 2, *Iuridicheskie dokumenty i pis'ma* (Izdatel'stvo vostochnoi literatury, 1962), 115-117 and 120-121, https://www.orientalstudies.ru/rus/images/pdf/c_sogdian_mss_vol2_livshits_1962.pdf#page=121; in English, V. A. Livshits, *Sogdian Epigraphy of Central Asia and Semirech'e*, trans. Tom Stableford, ed. Nicholas Sims-Williams, Corpus Inscriptionum Iranicarum, pt. 2, vol. 3, Sogdian 4 (School of Oriental and African Studies, 2015), 94-98, https://www.orientalstudies.ru/eng/images/pdf/b_livshits_2015.pdf; and on the political documents of the archive, Frantz Grenet and Étienne de la Vaissière, "The Last Days of Panjikent," *Silk Road Art and Archaeology* 8 (2002): 155-196; summarized in Étienne de la Vaissière, notice of *Silk Road Art and Archaeology* 8 (2002), *Abstracta Iranica* 25 (2004), no. 58, https://doi.org/10.4000/abstractairanica.4225.

19. Abdussattar Siddiqi, *Studien über die persischen Fremdwörter im klassischen Arabisch* (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1919), 72 and n. 2, https://archive.org/details/studienberdiep00sidd/page/n85/mode/1up; on the spelling, Richard C. Steiner, *Affricated Ṣade in the Semitic Languages*, American Academy for Jewish Research Monograph Series 3 (American Academy for Jewish Research, 1982), 52-54; for Parthian /č/, Agnes Korn, "Parthian *ž*," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 73, no. 3 (2010): 415, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0041977X1000039X; for M 1202, Desmond Durkin-Meisterernst, comp., *MIRTEXT: Published Manichaean Middle Persian and Parthian Texts* (Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Turfanforschung, 2014), PDF, M 1202, verso line 7 (PDF p. 622), https://turfan.bbaw.de/bilder/mirtext-2.pdf#page=622; first edited in W. B. Henning, "Two Manichaean Magical Texts, with an Excursus on the Parthian Ending *-ēndēh*," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 12, no. 1 (1947), https://doi.org/10.1017/S0041977X0007988X. The line reads *[rwc *yxš pd](xš)'hyd nrg'n n'm 'w cynyst"[n]*: the yakṣa who rules the seventh hour of the day goes forth to Čīnestān.

20. Ludwig Paul, "Persian Language i. Early New Persian," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, online ed., updated 21 November 2013, secs. "Historical Background" and "Dialectology," https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/persian-language-1-early-new-persian/; and for the contrary view, Werner Sundermann, "An Early Attestation of the Name of the Tajiks," in *Medioiranica: Proceedings of the International Colloquium Organized by the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven from the 21st to the 23rd of May 1990*, ed. Wojciech Skalmowski and Alois van Tongerloo, Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 48 (Peeters and Departement Oriëntalistiek, 1993), 169-170, https://openlibrary.org/works/OL3609424W.

21. Siddiqi, *Persischen Fremdwörter*, 67-68, https://archive.org/details/studienberdiep00sidd/page/n80/mode/1up; and on the vowel of the Sogdian spelling, Pelliot, *Notes on Marco Polo*, 1:270, https://dsr.nii.ac.jp/toyobunko/III-2-F-c-104/V-1/page-hr/0286.html.en. Pelliot reads the Sogdian *cynstn* as "*Čīnastan or *Čēnastan, or perhaps *Čīnstan."

22. On the Sogdian script, see Yutaka Yoshida, "Sogdian Language i. Description," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, 11 November 2016, sec. "Scripts, Orthography, and Basic Phonology," https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/sogdian-language-01/; on Book Pahlavi, D. N. MacKenzie, *A Concise Pahlavi Dictionary* (Oxford University Press, 1971), xii, https://lccn.loc.gov/73565479; on the Manichaean script, Steiner, *Affricated Ṣade*, 53-54; and on ṣād, Ahmad Al-Jallad, "'Aṣ-ṣādu llatī ka-s-sīn: Evidence for an Affricated Ṣād in Sibawayh?" *Folia Orientalia* 51 (2014): 51-53 and 56, https://czasopisma.pan.pl/Content/85526; Marijn van Putten, *Quranic Arabic: From Its Hijaẓi Origins to Its Classical Reading Traditions*, Studies in Semitic Languages and Linguistics 106 (Brill, 2022), 124 n. 4 and 125 n. 7, https://library.oapen.org/bitstream/20.500.12657/53857/1/9789004506251.pdf#page=147.

23. Étienne de la Vaissière, *Sogdian Traders: A History*, trans. James Ward, Handbook of Oriental Studies, sec. 8, Uralic and Central Asian Studies 10 (Brill, 2005), 263-264, https://doi.org/10.1163/9789047406990_015.

24. On *tāzīg* and its derivation from Tayyiʾ, see John R. Perry, "Tajik i. The Ethnonym: Origins and Application," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, online ed., 20 July 2009, sec. "Etymology and sociolinguistics," https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/tajik-i-the-ethnonym-origins-and-application; and Pelliot, *Notes on Marco Polo*, 1:44-45, https://dsr.nii.ac.jp/toyobunko/III-2-F-c-104/V-1/page-hr/0060.html.en.

25. For Tačik, see Hübschmann, *Armenische Grammatik*, 86-87, no. 205, https://archive.org/details/ArmenischeGrammatik/page/n109/mode/1up; and for Sebeos, Robert W. Thomson and James Howard-Johnston, with Tim Greenwood, *The Armenian History Attributed to Sebeos*, 2 pts., Translated Texts for Historians 31 (Liverpool University Press, 1999), 17 n. 118, 136 n. 841, 156, 315, https://doi.org/10.3828/978-0-85323-564-4. Hübschmann cites the Armenian 2 Maccabees and the *Buzandaran* among other texts. Howard-Johnston dates the writing to 655, with additions about 661 (156).

26. Dieter Weber, "Living Together in Changing Iran: Pahlavi Documents on Arabs and Christians in Early Islamic Times," *Annales islamologiques* 54 (2021): 139, 152, 163, https://www.ifao.egnet.net/anisl/54/9#page=2. The document is Berk. 95, line 6, which spells the word ṭ'cyk'n; Weber dates it to the year 40[+3] of the post-Yazdegird era, 691/692[+3].

27. Livshits, *Sogdiiskie dokumenty s gory Mug*, vyp. 2, 78-79, 87-88, 90 (doc. A-14), 130 (doc. B-14), https://www.orientalstudies.ru/rus/images/pdf/c_sogdian_mss_vol2_livshits_1962.pdf#page=82; on the political documents of the archive and its end in 722, Grenet and de la Vaissière, "Last Days of Panjikent," 155-196; summarized in La Vaissière, notice of *Silk Road Art and Archaeology* 8, https://doi.org/10.4000/abstractairanica.4225; for the Bactrian, Nicholas Sims-Williams, *Bactrian Documents from Northern Afghanistan*, vol. 1, *Legal and Economic Documents*, Studies in the Khalili Collection 3, Corpus Inscriptionum Iranicarum, pt. 2, vol. 6 (Nour Foundation in association with Azimuth Editions and Oxford University Press, 2000), 126-133 (doc. W), 225, https://collections.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/object-bab-4427; and for the date CE, *Invisible East Digital Corpus*, Bactrian records ed. Nicholas Sims-Williams, IEDC 4 (doc. W), https://www.invisible-east.org/corpus/4/.

28. Wang Qinruo et al., *Cefu yuangui* (1013), Wenyuange *Siku quanshu* ed., juan 970, "Waichen bu, Chaogong," 16b (651), https://archive.org/details/06065555.cn/page/n71/mode/1up; Hyunhee Park, *Mapping the Chinese and Islamic Worlds: Cross-Cultural Exchange in Pre-modern Asia* (Cambridge University Press, 2012), 6, https://assets.cambridge.org/97811070/18686/excerpt/9781107018686_excerpt.pdf#page=6. The entry of 651 reads 大食國始遣使朝貢.

29. Du You, *Tongdian* (801), Wenyuange *Siku quanshu* ed., juan 193, "Dashi," 28a-b, https://archive.org/details/06071343.cn/page/n102/mode/1up. The entry opens 大食，大唐永徽中，遣使朝貢，云其國在波斯之西.

30. For the embassy, *Jiu Tangshu*, juan 4, Yonghui 2 (651), eighth month, 5b (Zhonghua shuju ed., 4.69), https://archive.org/details/06058947.cn/page/n65/mode/1up; *Jiu Tangshu*, juan 198, "Dashi guo," 35b-37a (Zhonghua shuju ed., 198.5315-5316), https://archive.org/details/06059039.cn/page/n70/mode/1up; on the ruler's name, see Hirth and Rockhill, *Chau Ju-kua*, 119n1, https://archive.org/details/cu31924023289345/page/119/mode/1up.

31. Yijing, *Da Tang xiyu qiufa gaoseng zhuan* (691), Taishō no. 2066, juan 1, life of Xuanzhao, 51:2a17-18, https://cbetaonline.dila.edu.tw/zh/T51n2066_p0002a17; for the translation, Édouard Chavannes, trans., *Mémoire composé à l'époque de la grande dynastie T'ang sur les religieux éminents qui allèrent chercher la loi dans les pays d'Occident*, by I-tsing (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1894), 25, https://ci.nii.ac.jp/ncid/BA49871320; cited in J. Takakusu, trans., *A Record of the Buddhist Religion as Practised in India and the Malay Archipelago (A.D. 671-695)*, by I-tsing (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1896), liii n. 3, https://archive.org/details/recordofbuddhist00ichi/page/n58/mode/1up; and for Pelliot's reading, Pelliot, *Notes on Marco Polo*, 1:44-45, https://dsr.nii.ac.jp/toyobunko/III-2-F-c-104/V-1/page-hr/0060.html.en. The text reads 迦畢試途多氏捉而難度 (2a17-18).

32. For the note, see Yijing, *Da Tang xiyu qiufa gaoseng zhuan*, juan 1, 51:2a21-22, with the apparatus, https://cbetaonline.dila.edu.tw/zh/T51n2066_p0002a21; and for Takakusu's view, Takakusu, *Record of the Buddhist Religion*, xxx n. 2, 168 n. 1, https://archive.org/details/recordofbuddhist00ichi/page/n35/mode/1up. The note 言多氏者即大食國也 follows 春秋六十餘矣 and closes the life. The apparatus records variants in the Song, Yuan, Ming, or Palace editions at 2a17, 2a18, and 2a21, none of them in the note.

33. Hyecho, *Wang Ocheonchukguk jeon*, Dunhuang manuscript, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Pelliot chinois 3532, images in the Dunhuang Academy's Digital Library Cave, image 7 (Persia and the Dashi) and image 6 (Tokharistan), https://cave17.e-dunhuang.com/item/FRA.BNF.Pel@3532@WX.Chs.html; and for the Taishō text, Hyecho, *Wang Ocheonchukguk jeon* (about 727), in *Yuhōki shō*, Taishō no. 2089(1), 51:978b09, https://cbetaonline.dila.edu.tw/zh/T51n2089_p0978b09. The manuscript writes 又從波斯國北行十日入山至大寔國. Its second graph is cursive, a roof over 是, and at the resolution of the images a 穴-topped form cannot be excluded.

34. William H. Baxter and Laurent Sagart, "Baxter-Sagart Old Chinese Reconstruction, Version 1.1 (20 September 2014)," companion list to *Old Chinese: A New Reconstruction* (Oxford University Press, 2014), 19 (大), 25 (多), 100 (食, 氏), https://sites.lsa.umich.edu/ocbaxtersagart/wp-content/uploads/sites/1415/2025/03/BaxterSagartOCbyMandarinMC2014-09-20.pdf#page=21; Pelliot, *Notes on Marco Polo*, 1:44-45, https://dsr.nii.ac.jp/toyobunko/III-2-F-c-104/V-1/page-hr/0060.html.en. Baxter and Sagart give 大 both *dajH* and *daH*.

35. For 大慕闍 in the entry of 719, see Wang Qinruo et al., *Cefu yuangui*, juan 971, 4a, https://archive.org/details/06065555.cn/page/n94/mode/1up; for the teacher, Werner Sundermann, "Manicheism v. Missionary Activity and Technique," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, online ed., 20 July 2009, sec. "Missions to Northeastern Iran and Central Asia," https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/manicheism-iv-missionary-activity-and-technique; for Sogdian names in *-βntk*, Pavel B. Lurje, *Personal Names in Sogdian Texts*, Iranisches Personennamenbuch 2, fasc. 8 (Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2010), 140, no. 287; 142, no. 295, https://verlag.oeaw.ac.at/api/download/content/9783700168386_kapitel_135_157.pdf; and for Livshits's judgment, Livshits, *Sogdiiskie dokumenty s gory Mug*, vyp. 2, 88 n. 41, https://www.orientalstudies.ru/rus/images/pdf/c_sogdian_mss_vol2_livshits_1962.pdf#page=92. Sundermann identifies the teacher of 719 as a *mōžak*. Lurje gives 波何畔陀 for *βγγβntk* and 石槃陀 for *βntk*. Livshits names the Chinese *da-shi* and the Tibetan *stag-gzig*.

36. For the Kavi plate of Jayabhaṭa IV, see V. V. Mirashi, ed., *Inscriptions of the Kalachuri-Chedi Era*, Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum 4, pt. 1 (Government Epigraphist for India, 1955), no. 23, 98, 99 n. 7, https://archive.org/details/dli.ernet.53719/page/n353/mode/1up. The Kavi plate is of June 736 (98); its corrupt verse 2 reads *Tājjika* in Mirashi's restoration (99 n. 7).

37. Wang Qinruo et al., *Cefu yuangui*, juan 999, "Waichen bu, Qingqiu," 17a-b (718), 18b-20a (719), https://archive.org/details/06065565.cn/page/n33/mode/1up. The king of Samarkand writes 經今六年被大食元率將異密屈底波領衆軍兵來此共臣等鬬戰.

38. Hyecho, Pelliot chinois 3532, image 6, https://cave17.e-dunhuang.com/item/FRA.BNF.Pel@3532@WX.Chs.html. The manuscript reads 見今大寔兵馬在彼鎮押.

39. *Jiu Tangshu*, juan 109, life of Li Siye, 15b (Zhonghua shuju ed., 109.3298), https://archive.org/details/06059002.cn/page/n58/mode/1up. The life reads 羣胡忿之，與大食連謀，將欲攻四鎮。仙芝懼，領兵二萬深入胡地，與大食戰，仙芝大敗.

40. For the attack on Guangzhou in 758, see *Jiu Tangshu*, juan 10, Qianyuan 1 (758), ninth month, 20a (Zhonghua shuju ed., 10.253), https://archive.org/details/06058950.cn/page/n39/mode/1up; *Jiu Tangshu*, juan 198, "Bosi guo," 33a (Zhonghua shuju ed., 198.5313), https://archive.org/details/06059039.cn/page/n65/mode/1up; *Xin Tangshu* [New Tang history], juan 6, Qianyuan 1, ninth month, 8a (Zhonghua shuju ed., 6.161), https://archive.org/details/06060811.cn/page/n15/mode/1up; *Xin Tangshu*, juan 221B, "Bosi," 20a (Zhonghua shuju ed., 221B.6259), https://archive.org/details/06062518.cn/page/n114/mode/1up; Sima Guang, *Zizhi tongjian*, juan 220, Qianyuan 1 (758), 35a-b, https://archive.org/details/06057172.cn/page/n70/mode/1up; for the lives of Deng Jingshan, *Jiu Tangshu*, juan 110, life of Deng Jingshan, 15a (Zhonghua shuju ed., 110.3313), https://archive.org/details/06059002.cn/page/n100/mode/1up; *Xin Tangshu*, juan 141, life of Deng Jingshan, 3b (Zhonghua shuju ed., 141.4655), https://archive.org/details/06060870.cn/page/n79/mode/1up. The *Jiu Tangshu* life has 商胡大食、波斯等商旅死者數千人, and the *Xin Tangshu* life 大食、波斯賈胡死者數千人.