

wonderful persistence for years after the conquests of Kutaiba, and well into the middle of the eighth century.¹

The Chinese annals represent indeed that some small districts of Persia maintained their independence against the Arabs for a considerable time, and between 713 and 755 sent ten separate embassies to the court of China. A prince of Tabaristan is especially mentioned as sending one of these missions; his country is correctly described as surrounded on three sides by mountains and on the north by the Little Sea (the Caspian). The capital was called SARI.² In the time of the Kings of Persia this had been the seat of an officer called the Great General of the East. This officer had refused to submit to the Arabs, and in 746 he (or rather a successor) sent envoys to the Emperor of China and received a title of honour. Eight years later he sent his son to China, and the Emperor conferred high military rank upon him. The father perished at the hands of the Arabs.

One more embassy is reported from Persia in 923. The greater part of Persia seems at that time to have been under the Samanid dynasty at Bokhara, with whom intercourse was carried on and a marriage alliance took place some twenty years later, if we can depend on the Arabian traveller Ibn Muhalhal (see § 84).

63. In this part of our subject we may also mention as worthy of note, though without being able to throw any light upon it, the tradition of the Druzes of Syria that China is the land of their forefathers, and the happy country to which good Druzes revert beyond the grave.³

VI. NESTORIAN CHRISTIANITY IN CHINA.

64. The traditions of the eastern churches take back the preaching of the Gospel in China to a very old date indeed. Not

¹ See *Remusat*, to p. 102. He says the Chinese power really extended to the Caspian in the latter half of the seventh and first half of the eighth centuries. But how can this be reconciled with the Mahomedan conquests?

² An old city of Mazandaran, which is celebrated in the legends of Afrasiab. There are, or were in the last century, still to be seen at Sari four ancient circular temples, each thirty feet in diameter and one hundred and twenty feet high (*Malcolm*, u.s., p. 42).

³ Mr. Cyril Graham in *Journ. R. Geog. Soc.*, vol. xxvii, pp. 262-3.