

before at his Court, where he had left a regent, and the various items of information listed in the *pên-chi* come in succession in chronological order, irrespective of the place where the event took place. The *pên-chi* (*Liao shih*, 2, 2 b), having just spoken of a canal dug in the region of the Šira-muren, go on to say : « [In the third *t'ien-tsan* year, in the ninth month,] on the *kuei-hai* day (October 28, 924), the kingdom of the Ta-shih (Arabs) came to offer tribute. » There is no reason to believe that this « embassy » did not come to the Court, at Shang-ching, in the north of Jehol Province. Moreover, this was not the first diplomatic intercourse between the Liao and Mussulman countries : an embassy from Po-ssü, *i. e.* Persia, had come to the Ch'i-tan Court in 923 (*Liao shih*, 2, 2 a; 70, 1 b). According to Mussulman sources, the first embassy from the Qitā-khān that is recorded is the one which came to Ghazna in 1026-1027. The principal text referring to this embassy is the one which appears in the *Tabā'i' al-ḥayawān*, completed *c. A.D.* 1120; attention has been drawn to it by MINORSKY (*cf. Comptes rendus de l'Ac. des Inscr.* 1937, 317-324), though it has not yet been published.

The last Ch'i-tan Emperor was dethroned by the Jučen in 1125; but one of the members of the Imperial family who would not submit to the conquerors fled to the West with part of his tribe; he finally settled in the region of the Chu River, and founded the empire known as Qarā-Hītai, « Black Hītai », which lasted almost a century. But the history of the Qarā-Hītai, although known in broad outline, is crammed with uncertainties and contradictions which come to one's notice as soon as one tries to make sure of a fact, a name, or a date.

The founder of the Qarā-Hītai empire is generally called in Chinese 耶律大石 Yeh-lü Ta-shih, sometimes 大石林牙 Ta-shih Lin-ya (*cf. Liao shih*, 29, 2 a; 30, 2 a; *Chin shih*, 3, 7 a; *Br.* 1, 211; GILES, *Biogr. Dict.* No. 2452; GIBERT, *Dict. . . de la Mandchourie*, 974). Yeh-lü is the clan name of the Ch'i-tan Imperial family, also spelt 移剌 I-la (*TP*, 1930, 48); two forms 益律子 I-lü-tzū and 亦剌思 I-la-ssü seem to transcribe a plural of the same name (*TP*, 1931, 118, 469). The connection established in some Chinese works like the *Ch'i-tan kuo chih* between « Yeh-lü » and a place-name 世里 Shih-li is rightly distrusted in *Liao shih*, 116, 1 b (it is accepted by GIBERT, *Dict. . . de la Mandchourie*, 113; d'OHSSON's « Chéliou » [*Oh*, 1, 113] and HOWORTH's « Sheliu » [*JRAS*, 1881, 142] render the same Shih-li, but altered by a slip of VISDELOU). We do not know the true Ch'i-tan original, and *Iru, plur. *Irus, with an alternative form *Ira, plur. *Iras, are not the only possible restorations (for other hypotheses, *cf.* HOWORTH, in *JRAS*, 1881, 144). « Lin-ya » is not ambiguous; it was the Ch'i-tan term for a man with a *han-lin* degree (*cf. Liao shih*, 45, 6 a-b; 116, 4 b); *lin* is the *lin* of *han-lin*, and *ya* may be used as in the modern term *ya-mên* (this *ya* goes back to T'ang times). Yeh-lü Ta-shih, well versed in the Ch'i-tan and Chinese scripts, had received his doctor's degree in 1115. The case of « Ta-shih » is less simple. Although it looks like a man's personal name, I have a strong suspicion that it is a title. Yeh-lü Ta-shih had been 節度使 *chieh-tu-shih* (Commissioner High-Commander) of an important army, and we know from the *Chin shih* (1, 2 b) that the Liao gave to the *chieh-tu-shih* the name of 太師 *t'ai-shih*, which was certainly pronounced *taiši* in Ch'i-tan, as it was afterwards in Mongolian. Now, *taiši* represents both Ch. *t'ai-shih* and Ch. 太子 *t'ai-tzū*. and I have quoted elsewhere a re-transcription 大石 *ta-shih*, to be read as 太石 *t'ai-shih*, which renders a Mongol form *taiši* itself originating from the Chinese (*TP*, 1930, 44-45). The case may be the same here,