

Chitrāl
between
Tibetans
and Badakh-
shān.

It is this important geographical and strategic fact which explains the persistent efforts made by the Tibetans at this period to penetrate from the Indus Valley into Gilgit and Yasīn, and thus to secure access to the Pāmīrs across the Darkōt and Barōghil Passes.³² Chitrāl, too, became an important objective to them; for not only was it possible for this hill state, if gained over to the Tibetan side, to render the position of the Chinese garrison in Gilgit untenable by interfering with its line of supplies from Kashmīr,³³ but through it lay also the most direct and convenient route from the Indus to Tokhāristān. The latter territory was constantly threatened by the Arabs from the middle Oxus, and had repeatedly sought Chinese aid to avert subjugation. Hence it was an important gain for Tibetan policy when P'o-t'ê-mo, the chief of Chitrāl, offered his assistance against this mainstay of Imperial influence on the Oxus.

Waning of
Chinese
influence.

The attempt of A.D. 750 was frustrated by Kao Hsien-chih's successful intervention in Chitrāl. But after the disaster which overtook him and the Imperial arms a year later to the north of Farghāna it is probable that Chinese influence south of the Hindukush speedily came to an end.³⁴ Soon afterwards the internal troubles of the Empire, due to the great rebellion of An-lu-shan (A.D. 756-8), threw open the whole of Kan-su and other parts of westernmost China to Tibetan aggression. By A.D. 766 the Tibetans had succeeded in completely cutting off the Imperial garrisons holding the Tārīm Basin, and the region immediately to the north of it, from China proper.³⁵ It is a reasonable conjecture that the opening of this wide new field for Tibetan enterprise north-eastwards must have caused a relaxation of their efforts in the west. This would explain why no more is heard of Tibetan activity from across the Hindukush and the Pāmīrs, and why as late as A.D. 758-9 auxiliaries sent by 'Tokhāristān and nine other kingdoms of the Western Countries' are mentioned by the T'ang Annals among the troops which helped the Emperor Su-tsung to reconquer his capital from the rebels.³⁶

Recollection
of Chinese
intervention.

The notice we have just examined may claim special historical interest; for it shows that even small Chitrāl, behind its mountain ramparts, had a part to play in the events of a critical period which decided the fate of Chinese influence in Central Asia for many centuries. It would be tempting to seek a dim recollection of the facts revealed by this brief glimpse of Chitrāl history in the tradition which relates the invasion of the country by 'a Calmak (Chinese) army in alliance with a prince of Badakhshān'.³⁷ Unfortunately, exceedingly vague as local chronology is, there is reason to doubt whether the line 'of princes styled Reis' (*recte* Ra'īs), under one of whom this invasion is said to have taken place, can be extended as far back as the eighth century A.D. In fact, Colonel Biddulph's record states that the event 'is spoken of as occurring after the death of Abdoollah Khān, the Usbek',³⁸ who manifestly was a Muhammadan Turk from the side of the Oxus.

Local chro-
nology of
Chitrāl.

Abdullah Khān, the Turk, figures also in the succinct outline of traditional epochs with which Waffadār Khān, Dīwān-bēgī, an intelligent Chitrāl noble and official, supplied me during my stay

³² For a synopsis of these efforts, cf. Chavannes, *Turcs occid.*, pp. 96 sq.; also *Ancient Khotan*, i. pp. 7 sqq.

³³ In *Ancient Khotan*, pp. 16 sq., I have fully indicated the routes by which the Chitrāl ruler could threaten the Gilgit line of supplies from Kashmīr where it crosses the Indus Valley. Such interference was facilitated if Chitrāl rule at the time extended, as it often has in more recent periods, also over Mastūj and the headwaters of the Chitrāl River; cf. *Ancient Khotan*, p. 16, note 31. For a similar extension of Chitrāl supremacy in Hsüan-tsang's time, cf. below, p. 44 sq.

³⁴ See Chavannes, *Turcs occid.*, p. 297; also above, p. 19.

³⁵ See the detailed account of these events given by M. Chavannes in Appendix A, *Ancient Khotan*, i. p. 534; *ibid.*, my summary, p. 63.

³⁶ Cf. Chavannes, *Turcs occid.*, pp. 158, 299. It is curious and significant of the eclipse of Chinese ambitions in Central Asia that Arabs (*Ta-shih*) figure among these foreign auxiliaries. They may have been mercenaries enlisted by the authorities of the 'Four Garrisons'.

³⁷ Cf. above, p. 28.

³⁸ See Biddulph, *Hindoo Koosh*, p. 150.