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Chapter 1

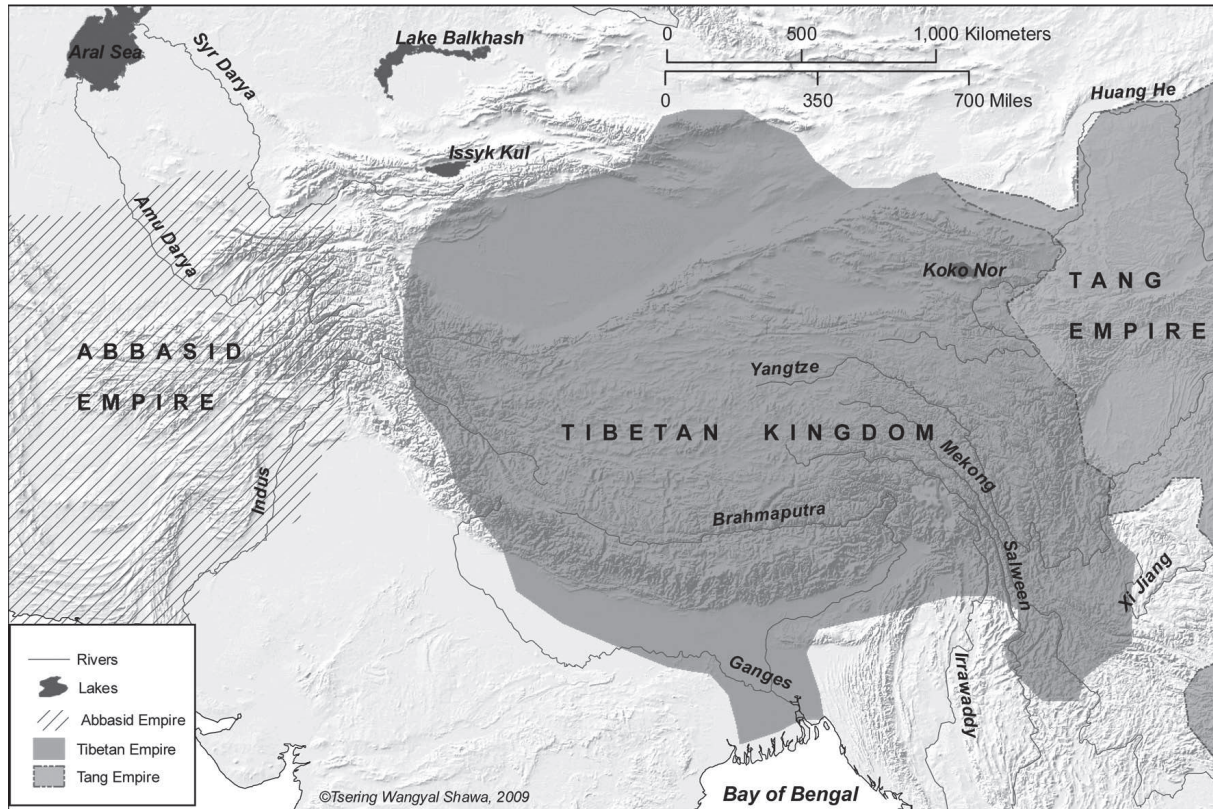
Islam and Tibet: Cultural Interactions – An Introduction

Ronit Yoeli-Tlalim

In the mid-eighth century three major empires abutted each other: the Abbasid Empire, founded in 750, which established its new capital at Baghdad in 762 and embraced the culture of Persia; the Tibetan Empire, which reached its height in the early ninth century; and Tang China (618-907) in the east, with its capital of Chang-an (Xi'an), spilling out into the Tarim Basin (East Turkistan, now Xinjiang). Cutting across these political regions were two powerful religious movements: Buddhism, which from its origins in northern India, challenged and eventually displaced local religions in China and Tibet, and Islam, which spread from the West over the Indian subcontinent and South East Asia, reaching China and the Tibetan borderlands. These political and religious movements of the eighth century were to shape the development of Central Asian civilizations for many centuries to come, and can still be discerned in the societies of the region today. It is to the ways in which the Islamic empire, in particular, impinged on Tibet (and *vice versa*), and to the role of Muslims in Tibetan society that this book is devoted.

By 'Tibet' is meant more than the geographical area of the Tibetan Plateau, or any current political construct such as the 'Tibetan Autonomous Region' (TAR). Regions that participated in Tibetan culture, such as Ladakh and Baltistan, are also included. Above all, Tibet is viewed as it was conceived throughout its changing history by its Islamic neighbours. And similarly, the lands of Islam are considered as viewed in Tibetan literature. Thus this book begins with an essay by Anna Akasoy on Tibet in Islamic geography and cartography: what names did the Arabic authorities have for Tibet, and what land did they mean when they referred to 'Tubbat' (which is taken to be the Arabic equivalent to Tibet)? How did they obtain their information? And did their knowledge of the area change over time? The primary aim of the article is to trace the tradition of the concept of Tibet in Arabic literature, rather than to exploit that literature for reliable information about Tibet in historical times. Thus the Arabic tales refer to conversions to Islam in Tibet; they claim that those who visit the country are so overwhelmed with such joy that they cannot refrain from laughing and that the country abounds with gold and musk.

In Tibetan there are a number of terms that refer to the Islamic empire and its people, of which the most important are *stag gzig*, *par sig*, *khrom/phrom* and



1.1 Tibetan Empire, 8th century (estimation)

kha che. *Stag gzig* in its various spellings (*stag gzigs*, *ta zig*, *ta zhigh*, *ta chig*) as well as *par sig* (*par sil*, *pa ra si ka*) refer in many cases, but not always, to Muslims or to Arabs in general. The earliest mentions of these names are to be found in the Tibetan Dunhuang material.¹ In Pelliot Tib. 1283, dated to the second half of the eighth century or the first half of the ninth,² we find a reference to the *par sil* tribe³ along with a mention of the *ta zhigh*.⁴ A reference to the land of *ta zig* is documented in a Tibetan medical text from Dunhuang which describes methods of moxibustion, and mentions the land of *ta zig* as a source for paper.⁵ The early renderings of the name *par sig* support a direct linguistic link, as suggested by Uray, between Tibetan and Early Middle Persian or possibly Sogdian.⁶

The name *ta zig* is related to 'Tajik', now the name of Tibet's closest Persian-speaking neighbours. Another Tibetan term that refers to lands in the West derives from 'Rome' (or 'Rum', Byzantium): Khrom (or: Phrom). As Dan Martin explains in his contribution here, it is hard to know where the exact delineation between Tazig and Khrom stands from the Tibetan point of view, and probably

¹ The Mogao caves at Dunhuang, western China, were discovered at the beginning of the twentieth century. In addition to the multitude of artistic treasures found there, the discovery of Cave 17, nicknamed 'the library', has had a revolutionary effect on Asian studies. The manuscripts have been dispersed among libraries in Paris, London, St Petersburg, Tokyo, Beijing and elsewhere. For electronic versions of some of these texts, and a bibliography see: otdo.aa.tufs.ac.jp and the website of the International Dunhuang Project: idp.bl.uk.

² See Louis Ligeti, 'À propos du "Rapport sur les rois demeurant dans le nord"', in *Études Tibétaines dédiées à la mémoire de Marcelle Lalou* (Paris, 1971), pp. 166-89, at p. 172.

³ Pelliot Tib. 1283, l. 10. See Jacques Bacot, 'Reconnaissance en Haute Asie Septentrionale', *Journal Asiatique*, 244 (1956): pp. 137-53, at pp. 141 and 145. Imaeda et al., however, have transliterated the name as *par mil*, see Yoshiro Imaeda, Tsuguhito Takeuchi et al., *Tibetan Documents from Dunhuang* (Tokyo, 2007), p. 179, l. 542.

⁴ Pelliot Tib. 1283, l. 85. Clauson, basing himself on old Turkic inscriptions, infers that the reference to the *ta zhigh* in Pelliot 1283 refers to Arabs (and not to Persians). See Gérard Clauson, 'À propos du manuscrit Pelliot Tibétain 1283', *Journal Asiatique*, 245 (1957): pp. 11-24.

⁵ Saying: 'If there is bleeding from the nose use paper from *ta zig*': Pelliot Tib. 127, l. 174. Luo Bingfen et al. (eds), *Tun hong nas thon pa'i bod kyi gso rig yig cha gces bsdus* (Pe cin, 2002), p. 222.

⁶ Géza Uray, 'Tibet's Connections with Nestorianism and Manicheism', in Ernst Steinkellner and Helmut Tauscher (eds), *Contributions on Tibetan Language, History and Culture*, vol. 1 (Vienna, 1983), pp. 399-429, at p. 409. Uray discusses another early (eighth century) mention of the name *par sig*. In the *Vimalaprabhā*, the commentary on the *Kālacakra tantra*, the Tibetan version of the name appears to be based, as one would expect, on the Sanskrit (*pārasika*) – *pā ra si ka* in Bu-ston, see Bu-ston Rin-chen-grub, *The Collected Works of Bu-ston*, ed. Lokesh Chandra (New Delhi, 1965), vol. 1, fol. 391, l. 5. It might be the case that when the transcription is *par sig* (or *par sil*) the name is derived from Sogdian or Early Middle Persian, and when it is *pa ra si ka* it is derived from the Sanskrit.

all we can state with any degree of certainty is that in Tibetan they refer to areas in close proximity to each other.

A significant contact with Muslims was through neighbouring Kashmir. So many Muslims had arrived in Tibet through plying their trade via Kashmir that Muslim settlers in Tibet were called by a name deriving from the name 'Kashmir': *kha che*. Whether this term already meant 'Muslim' in general, rather than 'Kashmiri' in a mention of *kha che* silk in a Dunhuang manuscript from the ninth century is not clear.⁷

Kashmir had already been an important cultural junction in the seventh and eighth centuries when Buddhist scriptures and scientific works were transmitted from there both to Tibet and to the emerging Islamic culture. This is the subject of the article by Kevin van Bladel. Barmak, the father of the Barmakid family, was an educated Buddhist official from Tokharistan (Bactria), an area where Buddhism and its related Sanskrit sciences flourished at the time the Arabs arrived. The family then became very important in the Abbasid court in Baghdad and the Barmak's grandson, Yaḥyā, became the tutor and then the powerful minister of the caliph, Hārūn al-Rashīd (reg. 786-809). Van Bladel demonstrates how, as a result of Yaḥyā's Buddhist roots and his family ties with Tokharistan and Kashmir, Yaḥyā facilitated a substantial translation enterprise from Sanskrit to Arabic in the Caliph's court. A major outcome of this enterprise was the monumental translation of the Indian medical classics into Arabic: the *Sūśruta*, the *Aṣṭāṅgahr̥daya saṃhitā* of Vāgbhaṭa and the *Siddhasāra* of Ravigupta. These same texts were also translated into Tibetan a short while later and thereafter became core texts in the Tibetan medical tradition. Although the full impact of the Indian tradition on Arabic medicine is yet to be studied, van Bladel provides sufficient evidence to show its importance, particularly in the area of pharmacopoeia. The cultural links facilitated by the Barmak family are inherently rooted in the special conditions developed in Central Asia in the century after the Arabs arrived and when Buddhism was still widely practised.

Another outcome of the coexistence of Buddhists and Muslims in Central Asia is discussed by Christopher Beckwith, who suggests that the adoption of the scholastic method in the Islamic world was a result of the conversion of the Central Asian Buddhist *viḥāras* (monastic colleges) into Islamic *madrasas*. According to Beckwith, the conversion incorporated not only the structure, but also the people – and with them their method of learning too. The earliest known examples of the scholastic method appear to be, Beckwith suggests, in commentarial texts of the *Sarvāstivādin* school of Buddhism, which flourished in Central Asia. The first Muslim writer known to have used the scholastic method is Ibn Sīnā, who was born and educated in Central Asia. The sudden appearance

⁷ In IOL Tib J 756 l. 33. The term is: *kha che dar*, which could be rendered either as Kashmiri or Muslim silk. See Bingfen et al. (eds), *Tun hong nas*, p. 133. A similar expression is found in the *Li yul lung bstan pa*, where it appears as: *kha cher dar*. See Ronald E. Emmerick, *Tibetan Texts Concerning Khotan* (London, 1967), p. 33.

of the scholastic method in Western Europe followed the translation of one of the most important of Ibn Sīnā's works from Arabic into Latin, and coincided with the transmission of the *madrasa* to Europe as the college.

Whereas texts can often demonstrate precise details of transmission between cultures, as in the cases presented by van Bladel and Beckwith, visual evidence of transmission is not always so clear-cut. Souren Melikian-Chirvani, however, draws attention to some tantalizing hints at this evidence in regard to links between Tibet and Iran. The evidence suggests that at a very early age – at least as early as the mid sixth century BCE – the artefacts of horsemanship, of hunting and warfare of a type known from western Iran, became familiar to the populations of present-day Tibet. Other, later evidence, suggests a clearer link: Melikian-Chirvani discusses three types of silver wine banquet vessels made in the Iranian world which reached Tibet around the seventh–eighth century CE. He also explores the provenance of Persian silk amongst Tibetans: pictorial and material evidence indicate that Persian brocaded silks were used as royal garments in Tibet as early as the seventh century. This includes a fragment of Sasanian silk with a Pahlavi inscription establishing its royal ownership which was recovered from a Tibetan tomb. He also notes the enduring memory of these textiles in the traces they left in western Tibetan mural paintings in Ladakh (Alchi) and Spiti (Tabo). Could it be that the reference found in the Dunhuang manuscript to *kha che* silk refers to what Melikian-Chirvani is describing from visual evidence? This question is yet to be investigated.

A study conducted by Christopher Beckwith in the late 1970s⁸ brought to light the significance of the influence of medical knowledge originating in areas lying to the west of Tibet on Tibetan medicine. Beckwith mentioned references to medical influence deriving from Tazig and Khrom. These links, as mentioned in one of the earliest histories of Tibetan medicine, are further discussed in this volume by Dan Martin.

The sources discussed by Beckwith, as well as other sources which have come to light in the three decades since he published his article, mention a certain *Ga le nos*, as one of the four sages who introduced medicine into Tibet. This 'Galenos' obviously does not refer to Galen himself, but rather to the transmission of elements of Galenic medicine, which could have arrived in Tibet via Arabic, Persian or Syriac intermediaries.

Interestingly enough, in the earliest extant Tibetan medical history discussed by Martin, this 'Galenos' is not mentioned. In this medical history by Che rje, composed in the thirteenth century, there is a reference to another figure who is associated with medicine originating from the West: Tsan pa shi la ha, or as Martin suggests reading his name: Tsan Bashilaha. He suggests 'Tsan' refers to his origin from the shores of the Black Sea, and reading 'Bashilaha' as 'Basileos'. More research will be needed to ascertain more about this figure, and the

⁸ Christopher I. Beckwith, 'The Introduction of Greek Medicine into Tibet in the Seventh and Eighth Centuries', *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 99 (1979): pp. 297-313.

knowledge he may have brought with him. Martin also embarks on a revealing account of the medical content of the book ascribed to this Tsan Bashilaha: the *Bi ci'i pu ti kha ser*, which has recently been published. A method for detecting invisible skull fractures discussed in this text resembles methods described in Greek and Arabic medicine.

How one might explain the later appearance of the name 'Galenos' in Tibetan medical histories remains an open question for the time being. In any case, by the seventeenth century details concerning this 'Galenos' are abundant in the Tibetan historical narratives. One of the most detailed accounts of the contacts between Tibetan and Western (Persian) medical sciences is in the medical history by De'u dmar bstan 'dzin phun tshogs (b. 1672).⁹ De'u dmar tells us not only about Ga le nos and Biji Tsan pa shi la ha, the representatives of what seems to be an Arabo-Persian tradition, but also about an entire 'Biji' lineage, spanning from Persia to Tibet, or rather from the Persian court and into the Tibetan court. One of the predecessors of the Biji lineage was a certain Ga le thos, who, according to De'u dmar, served as the personal physician to the king of the *stag gzig*.¹⁰ According to De'u dmar, Biji Ga le thos's son was the Ga le nos who was invited to Tibet during the reign of Srong btsan sgam po (617–49). We are told that he cured Srong btsan sgam po's illness and hence was requested to become chief doctor. The younger brother of Ga le nos had two sons – the older was Biji Tsan pa shi la ha, who was invited to Tibet by the Tibetan prince Ljang tsha lha dbon, son of Mes ag tshom (d. 755). Furthermore, De'u dmar tells us, Tshan pa shi la ha: '... arrived in the Tibetan kingdom after having been dispatched by the king of Khrom together with 300 [other] masters and students [of medicine] and hence the medical teachings spread'.¹¹

What is particularly interesting about De'u dmar's account is that it portrays the links with *stag gzig* doctors as spanning through a continuous period of time. Not only the famous 'Galenos', but an entire lineage is associated with *stag gzigs* and *khrom*. The significant input from the *stag gzig* doctors described by De'u dmar leaves us with the question: what was the nature of the medical knowledge that arrived from the Arab-Persian world into the Tibetan medical system? This is a vast question. But some indications can be gained from the analysis of the urine section from the early Tibetan medical text, the *Zla ba'i rgyal po*,¹² in which doctrines and practices from Western medicine appear among the more evident

⁹ For a discussion of this source, see Frances Garrett, 'Critical Methodologies in Tibetan Medical Histories', *Journal of Asian Studies*, 66 (2007): pp. 363-87.

¹⁰ De'u dmar bstan 'dzin phun tshogs. 'Gso ba rig pa'i chos byung rnam thar rgya mtsho'i rba rlabs drang srong dgyes pa' 'dzum phreng', in *Gso rig gces btus rin chen phreng ba bzugs so* (Zi ling, 1993), pp. 632-764, at p. 704.

¹¹ De'u dmar bstan 'dzin phun tshogs. 'Gso ba rig pa'i chos byung', p. 705.

¹² Ronit Yoeli-Tlalim, 'On Urine Analysis and Tibetan Medicine's Connections with the West', in Sienna Craig et al. (eds), *Studies of Medical Pluralism in Tibetan History and Society* (Halle, 2011), pp. 195-211.

influences deriving from the Indian and the Chinese spheres. The *Zla ba'i rgyal po* is an early example of a synthesis of medical ideas deriving from different cultures. How and when did the Western input come to Tibet is still a question to be resolved, but the material acquired so far suggests that further research into these questions will be highly worthwhile.

Following the initial relations between Tibet and its Muslim neighbours during the time of the Tibetan Empire, contacts continued predominantly via trade. There is evidence that a trade route from Arabia to Persia, via northern India and into Tibet was in operation already in the eighth century and continued to be active until modern times. Another trade route is described by Binyamin of Tudela, the Spanish Jewish traveller who appears to have travelled to Baghdad in the second half of the twelfth century. He writes that Jewish traders with Tibet proceeded from Baghdad to Persia, to Shiraz, Ghazna and Samarkand. From there, he says: 'it is four days to Tibet, which is the land where musk¹³ is found in its forests'.¹⁴

A medieval map in the Arabic *Book of Curiosities*, written in Egypt in the eleventh century discussed in the Islam and Tibet conference by Yossef Rapoport, follows what seems to be a trade route which begins in India, goes to Tibet and from there to China.¹⁵ This not only highlights the place of Tibet along the Muslim trade routes, but also is interesting in locating Tibet on the route to China. Indeed Tibet can also be seen as an intermediary between China and the Islamic world in a cultural sense, a point which is reflected in Paul Buell's contribution.

Tibet was an important point on the Eurasian trade routes and a source for a number of exotic goods. The most famous among these was musk, used both in medicine and in perfumery. This is the focus of Anya King's contribution. We know that musk from Tibet was traded and used in the Near East and the Mediterranean from as early as the third century CE. Musk appears as a highly desired substance in a great variety of Arabic genres (geography, zoology,

¹³ The word used here is: מור (mor). On the identification of mor with musk in Hebrew sources see Shapirah, 'Al khomrei ha'bosem meha'khai bamkorot ha'ivriim' ('On Animal Perfume Substances in the Hebrew Sources'), *Harofé Haivri: The Hebrew Medical Journal*, 2 (1959): pp. 95-103.

¹⁴ *Benjamin of Tudela*, fol. 82, in *The Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela*, ed. and trans. Marcus Nathan Adler (London, 1907).

¹⁵ Emilie Savage-Smith and Yossef Rapoport (eds), *The Book of Curiosities: A Critical Edition*. Online publication (www.bodley.ox.ac.uk/bookofcuriosities) (last accessed: March 2007). The map in question is in Book 2, chap. 18. See also Yossef Rapoport and Emilie Savage-Smith, 'Medieval Islamic View of the Cosmos: The Newly Discovered Book of Curiosities', *The Cartographic Journal*, 41 (2004): pp. 253-9 and Yossef Rapoport, 'The Book of Curiosities: A Medieval Islamic View of the East', in Andreas Kaplony and Phillip Forêt (eds), *The Journey of Maps and Images on the Silk Road* (Leiden, 2008), pp. 155-71.

medicine, religion) as well as in accounts of merchants and travellers. In most of these it is the musk from Tibet that is deemed the best.

Musk, in addition to being a highly desired perfume, is a substance which is found both in Tibetan and Arabic medical literature. Based on a comparative study between the Arabic and the Tibetan uses of musk in medical contexts, we have come to the conclusion that, alongside trade, there were also exchanges of ideas.¹⁶ Hence the overall name we have suggested for the cultural exchanges discussed here: the Musk Route.¹⁷

The case of musk is an example of the ways in which 'super-drugs', as well as other luxury goods, were marketed through their exotic appeal. The construction of desirability and its associated lucrateness are intertwined with trade and power. A similar point is raised by van Bladel with respect to Central Asia, where the patronage of wealthy rulers funding Buddhist travellers, is intertwined with the existence of Buddhist texts where precious commodities were promoted.

An echo of trade contacts is also attested in the nature of many of the loan-words from Arabic and Persian which are found in Tibetan.¹⁸ These include, for example, the words in Tibetan for saffron (Tib. *kur kum*; *gur kum* or *gur gum*) from the Persian and Arabic *kurkum*; or the word for gold brocade: *zar babs* (from Pe. *zar baft*, discussed here by Melikian-Chirvani), or the word *nal*, the Tibetan word for ruby, from the Persian *lāl*, a much sought-after commodity in the Arab world which arrived from Central Asia.

A pivotal period of cultural exchanges between Tibet and the Islamic world occurred during the Mongol period, which is discussed here by Peter Zieme, Paul Buell and Arezou Azad. During the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, the Ilkhan Mongol rulers in Iran maintained close relations with Tibetan Buddhism. With the help of Arabic, Persian, Tibetan, Syriac and Armenian sources we can trace the extensive Tibetan presence in the Ilkhanid court in Tabriz, where most of the rulers were Buddhist and their spiritual advisers were lamas (*bakhshi*).¹⁹

Rashīd al-Dīn (1247-1318), a court physician, who became an extraordinarily powerful (and rich) minister of the Ilkhans, realized the exceptional cosmopolitan milieu that the Mongol rule had created.²⁰ As he tells us:

¹⁶ Anna Akasoy and Ronit Yoeli-Tlalim, 'Along the Musk Routes: Transmissions between Tibet and the Islamic World', *Asian Medicine: Tradition and Modernity*, 3 (2007): pp. 217-40.

¹⁷ I would like to thank Philip Denwood for first discussing this idea with me.

¹⁸ Berthold Laufer, 'Loan Words in Tibetan', *T'oung Pao*, 17 (1916): pp. 404-552. For the sections on loan words from Persian and Arabic see pp. 474-85.

¹⁹ For a discussion on the *bakhshis* in the Ilkhanid court see Rashīd al-Dīn, *Histoire des Mongols de la Perse*, trans. Étienne Quatremère (Amsterdam, 1968), pp. 184-99, n. 51. See also Leonard van der Kuijp, "'Bayši" and Bayši-s in Tibetan Historical, Biographical and Lexicographical Texts', *Central Asiatic Journal*, 39 (1995): pp. 275-302.

²⁰ See Anna Akasoy, Charles Burnett and Ronit Yoeli-Tlalim (eds), *Rashīd al-Dīn: Agent and Mediator of Cultural Exchanges in Ilkhanid Iran* (London, forthcoming).

Now that the world from one end to the other is under one or the other branch of the Chingiz Khanids, philosophers, astronomers, scholars and historians of all sects and religions connected with China [Khita], ancient India, Kashmir, Tibet, Uyghur, as well as other people like the Turks, Arabs and Franks are before our eyes in large numbers and every one of them has books containing the history, chronology and religious thought of those countries ...²¹

In addition to the more well-known association of Qubilai Khan with Tibetan Buddhism through the Sa skya Paṇḍita, we now also have evidence of the influence of Tibetan Buddhism in the Ilkhanid as well as the Chagatai Khanates.²² The first Ilkhan, Hülegü (Tib. Hu la hu or: Hu la; reg. 1256-65), was, like his brother Qubilai in China, a follower of Buddhism. As has been discussed by Sperling, Hülegü became a patron of the Tibetan Buddhist Phag mo gru sect and repeatedly sent gifts to their abbot, rGyal ba Rin po che Grags pa brtson 'grus.²³ The *Red Annals* (*Deb ther dmar po*), a Tibetan historical chronicle of the fourteenth century, tells us that the last presents reached Phag mo gru two years after the death of Hülegü (i.e. in 1267).²⁴ We also know that Hülegü, while already ruling in Iran, had a representative in Tibet, who is named in several Tibetan sources as Go go chu (Kokochu), and that through this representative, Hülegü maintained his jurisdiction over a number of areas in Tibet. There are also references to this representative's son taking part in the political life of the Phag mo gru several years later.²⁵ The Phag mo gru in central Tibet (in Ü, based at sNe'u gdong) had considerable religious and political power at the time, and it appears that the financial and military support from Hülegü was key in the power struggle between the Phag mo gru on the one hand, and on the other the Sa skya rulers, who were supported by the Mongol court of the Great Khans.

An interesting testimony of the link between Geikhatu (reg. 1291-95), the fifth Ilkhan, and Tibetan Buddhism, is found on a coin minted in his time, which includes his Tibeto-Mongol religious name: Rinchen Dorje (rin chen rdo rje,

²¹ Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmi' al-tawārikh*, translation in Thomas Allsen, *Culture and Conquest in Mongol Eurasia* (Cambridge, 2001), p. 83.

²² See Samuel Grupper, 'The Buddhist Sanctuary-Vihāra of Labnasagut and the Il-Qan Hülegü: An Overview of Il-Qanid Buddhism and Related Matters', *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi*, 13 (2004): pp. 5-77.

²³ These relations are attested to in a number of Tibetan sources. See, for example, Kun dga' rdo rje (1309-65), *Deb ther dmar po* (Peking, 1981), pp. 122-4. The *Blue Annals* say in reference to rGyal ba rin po che: 'Having heard about the fame of his accomplishments, king Hu-la from sTod presented on three occasions great offering to him.' 'Go lo tsā ba gzhon nu dpal, *The Blue Annals*, trans. George Roerich (Delhi, 1996), p. 580. For a detailed study see Elliot Sperling, 'Hülegü and Tibet', *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, 44 (1990): pp. 145-57.

²⁴ *Deb ther dmar po*, p. 122. Discussed by Sperling, 'Hülegü and Tibet', p. 151.

²⁵ Sperling, 'Hülegü and Tibet', p. 153.

meaning ‘precious diamond’) in its Mongolian form in Arabic transliteration, in addition to the Muslim profession of faith.²⁶

Ghāzān (reg. 1295-1304), the seventh Ilkhan, grew up as a Buddhist. Rashīd al-Dīn tells us that Ghāzān’s grandfather, Abāqā, surrounded him with Buddhist lamas, and hence he maintained a great affection for their religion. According to Rashīd al-Dīn, Ghāzān spoke Tibetan. He also patronized and constantly consorted with lamas who came from Tibet and Kashmir, and who were very influential among the Mongol upper classes up to his generation.²⁷

A revealing text in this respect is Rashīd al-Dīn’s *Life of the Buddha*, based on the input of the Kashmiri pandit, Kamalāśrī, and which is a part of Rashīd al-Dīn’s *History of India*.²⁸ As I have discussed elsewhere, the text reflects some interesting connections with Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism. The *Life of the Buddha* section contains, for example, one of the earliest (if not the earliest) piece of external evidence for the assembling of the Kanjur (bka’ ‘gyur).²⁹ Considering that Rashīd al-Dīn’s *Life of the Buddha* was composed around 1310, being more or less contemporary with the assembling the first Kanjur in Narthang, this mention is very interesting.

The Ilkhanate court was influenced not only by Tibetan Buddhism, but also by Kashmiri, Uyghur and Chinese Buddhism.³⁰ The significant input of Tibetan Buddhism in Kashmiri Buddhism of the time,³¹ as well as in Uyghur Buddhism, helps to explain the mirroring of a Tibetan type of Buddhism in Rashīd al-Dīn’s *Life of the Buddha*. The important role of Tibetan Buddhism amongst the Uyghurs

²⁶ De Saulcy, ‘Lettres sur quelques points de la numismatique orientales’, *Journal Asiatique*, 13 (1842): pp. 113-49, at pp. 129-32; Stanley Lane Poole, *Catalogue of Oriental Coins in the British Museum* (10 vols, London, 1875-90), vol. 6, p. 32.

²⁷ Arsenio P. Martinez, ‘Third Portion of the History of Ġāzān Xān in Rašīdu ‘d-Dīn’s *Ta’rīx-e Mobārak-e Ġāzānī*’, *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi*, 8 (1994): pp. 99-206, at p. 111, n. 13. The relevant sections in Rashīd al-Dīn’s *Tārīkh-e Mobārak-e Ghāzānī* quoted by Martinez are: pp. 165ff., 171ff. and 188.

²⁸ See Karl Jahn, *Rashīd al-Dīn’s History of India* (The Hague, 1965); Gregory Schopen, ‘Hīnayāna Texts in a 14th Century Persian Chronicle’, *Central Asiatic Journal*, 26 (1982): pp. 225-35.

²⁹ See the facsimiles in *Die Indiangeschichte des Rašīd ad-Dīn*, trans. Karl Jahn (Vienna, 1980), ms. Istanbul, Topkapı Sarayı. Hazine 1654, fol. 348r, l. 28 (Persian version) and ms. Khalili collection (formerly Royal Asiatic Society A 27), fol. 2077v, l. 1 (Arabic version). The text says that after the death of Śākyamuni, a stranger ‘collected the words and useful sayings of Śākyamuni in a book, the entirety of which he called Kashurdy (A: فِشوردي P: فِشوردي)’. ‘Kashurdy’ is presumably a transcription of ‘Kanjur’. See Ronit Yoeli-Tlalim, ‘Rashīd al-Dīn’s *Life of the Buddha* – Some Buddhist Perspectives’, in Akasoy et al. (eds), *Rashīd al-Dīn*.

³⁰ See Grupper, ‘The Buddhist Sanctuary’. See also: Klaus Röhrborn, ‘Die Islamische Weltgeschichte des Rašīduddīn als Quelle für den zentralasiatischen Buddhismus?’, *Journal of Turkish Studies*, 13 (1989): pp. 129-33.

³¹ See Jean Nadou, *Les Bouddhistes Kašmiriens au moyen age* (Paris, 1968).

is discussed here by Peter Zieme. Influence of Tibetan Buddhism on Uyghur culture during the Yuan (Mongol) period is attested to both in the numerous Buddhist texts that were translated from Tibetan into Uyghur during this time, and also in the influence which can be detected in Buddhist art in the Kurutka caves near Turfan. This influence went hand in hand with increasing Muslim presence. The tension between Buddhism and Islam in the Turfan area at the time, is attested to by an Uyghur Buddhist poem, that exhibits a hostile attitude to Islam.

Indeed, also in Iran the Buddhist days were not to last. Upon his ascension to the throne, Ghāzān converted to Islam. He then:

Commanded that all idols be smashed and all temples and other places of worship disallowed by law in the lands of Islam be destroyed. Most of the idol-worshipping *bakhshis* were converted to Islam, but since God had not slated them for success, the faith they held was not correct: outwardly they appeared to be Muslims, but from their foreheads showed traces of infidelity and error.

The text goes on to say that, after a while the Padishah of Islam [ie: Ghāzān] comprehended their hypocrisy and said, 'Let any of you who so desires, go to India, Kashmir, Tibet or his native country.'³²

The Persian term for a Buddhist place of worship is *butkhāna*. The aim of the research expedition on which Arezou Azad reports here, was to assess whether the references to *butkhānas* by Persian historians of the Ilkhanid period can be identified with any of the three rock-cut sites in the regions of Marāgha and Sultāniyya. During the Mongol period, Marāgha was the focus of scholarly exchanges between Iranian and Chinese astronomers, following the creation of an observatory commissioned by Hülegü and supervised by the famous scholar Nāṣir al-Dīn Ṭūsī (d. 1274). Having examined these sites, Azad reaches the conclusion that, despite the literary evidence, in the absence of any specifically Buddhist epigraphy, iconography or artefacts, it is difficult to confirm that any of these caves indeed served as Ilkhanid Buddhist worship sites. They rather seem to be a monumental *mélange* of Mithraic, Buddhist, Islamic and Christian episodes.

The exchanges between Iranian and Chinese astronomers and the possible role of Tibetans in the process was the topic of Benno van Dalen's paper at the Islam and Tibet conference (not included here).³³ In addition to the observatory at Marāgha, there was also an Islamic Astronomical Bureau with an observatory

³² *Rashiduddin Fazlullah's Jami'u't-tawarikh: Compendium of Chronicles. A History of the Mongols*, trans. Wheeler M. Thackston (3 vols, Cambridge, 1999), vol. 3, p. 676.

³³ See Benno van Dalen, 'Islamic and Chinese Astronomy under the Mongols: A Little-Known Case of Transmission', in Yvonne Dold-Samplonius, Joseph W. Dauben, Menso Folkerts and Benno van Dalen (eds), *From China to Paris: 2000 Years Transmission of Mathematical Ideas* (Stuttgart, 2002), pp. 327-56.

founded by Qubilai Khan in his new capital near present-day Beijing in 1271, which was headed by Zhamaluding (presumably the Muslim Jamāl al-Dīn al-Bukhārī), and had a large number of Muslim astronomers. The main surviving source for the achievements of the Bureau is a Chinese translation of an Islamic astronomical handbook with tables, called the *Huihuilifa*, which was composed in the early Ming dynasty (1383) and was later reworked in Nanjing in 1477, as well as in Seoul in 1442. In recent years a Persian manuscript in St Petersburg and an Arabic one from the Bibliothèque Nationale de France in Paris have been found to be related to the *Huihuilifa*. The Paris manuscript is an astronomical handbook by the otherwise unknown astronomer al-Sanjufīnī, who worked for the Mongol viceroy in northeastern Tibet in the 1360s and who based himself heavily on the material which is also included in the *Huihuilifa*. Van Dalen discussed the various characteristics of this work and showed through which route the knowledge it contains may have reached Tibet.

As in the court of the Great Khans, a major attraction for the Ilkhans was Buddhist medicine, and particularly substances, which supposedly had life-prolonging effects. Indeed, the parallels found between Tibetan and Arabic or Persian alchemy, as signalled by Michael Walter's studies on the Tibetan Jābir, provide scope for further illuminating research in this direction.³⁴

Tibetan medicine provides an interesting case of a cultural intermediary, as discussed here by Paul Buell. Looking at the role of Tibetans as key conduits of knowledge between 'East' and 'West', particularly between China and the Islamic world, Buell shows how the Tibetans played a decisive role in interpreting medicine at the Mongol court, since their own medicine involved some of the same syntheses as the cosmopolitan 'Muslim' medicine of Mongol China. As a medical system which synthesizes Greco-Arab, Indian and Chinese systems, Buell argues that Tibetan medicine stood in a favoured position, bridging the Chinese and Islamic systems during the Yuan dynasty. Tracing Tibetan influences in the Chinese *Huihui yaofang* ('Muslims Medicinal Recipes') and in the imperial dietary manual of Mongol China, the *Yinshan zhengya* ('Proper and Essential Things for the Emperor's Food and Drink'), Buell argues that the role of Tibetan medicine as a cultural intermediary was central.

Following the demise of the Mongol empire, another area of cultural interactions emerged in Ladakh and Baltistan, also known as: 'Middle Tibet' and 'Little Tibet' respectively. Inhabited by ethnic Tibetans, who speak Tibetan dialects, north-western India has witnessed various forms of co-existence between its two main religions: Tibetan Buddhism and Islam. An essential form of interchanges is seen in the reciprocal exchange of princess-brides, as told here by Georgios Halkias. Halkias discusses the practice of royal inter-marital

³⁴ Michael Walter, 'Jābir, the Buddhist Yogi I', *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, 20 (1992): pp. 425-38; 'Jābir, the Buddhist Yogi II: 'Winds' and Immortality', *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, 24 (1996): pp. 145-64; 'Jābir, the Buddhist Yogi, Part III: Considerations on an International Yoga of Transformation', *Lungta*, 16 (2003): pp. 21-36.

alliances across the Buddhist–Muslim divide in the Himalayas, primarily as depicted in local folk-songs and written histories. Bridal exchanges among peasants and aristocrats in Ladakh and Baltistan preserve accounts of an age-old Muslim–Buddhist symbiosis, celebrating the influence enjoyed by the Muslim queens in the Ladakhi court and by the descendants of such marriages. The marriages widened the basis of power of the royal families in question. Both parties were expected to respect each other’s faith and neither party had to undergo religious conversion. The convention of Islam and Buddhism coexisting in a family was common in Ladakh until recent times.

As Akasoy mentions, the conversion theme also appears in the earliest Muslim sources. Already Ya‘qūbī (ninth century), for example, claims that under al-Ma‘mūn the King of Tibet converted to Islam and then sent a golden image of the Buddha as a token of his conversion.³⁵ A fascinating visual account of this episode was presented by Deborah Klimburg-Salter in the Islam and Tibet conference, but unfortunately it is not included in this collection.

Looking at conversion narratives in a broader sense, we find that it is often alliances – whether military or for love and marriage – that serve the background for these conversion narratives. The conversion stories are often found to use mythical devices to reverse agonizing realities. The powerful ‘other’ becomes subdued in one form or other. The case of the Buddhist *Kālacakra tantra* and its Shambhala myth provide such a case of a conversion narrative. The *Kālacakra*, composed in India in the eleventh century and subsequently translated into Tibetan, contains an eschatological account describing the reign of the 25th ruler (*rigs ldan*) of Shambhala at the time when the entire earth will be conquered by Muslims (referred to as ‘barbarians’, Tib: *kla klo*). The *Kālacakra* recounts that at that time the Shambhala army will enter into battle with the *kla klos* and defeat them. Following that, the 25th ruler of Shambhala will reign over the entire earth, propagating the teachings of the Buddha in general, and the *Kālacakra* specifically. This eschatological account has been widely disseminated both in Tibet and Mongolia and used to various political ends.

Although it is often stated that the *Kālacakra* was composed in north India as a reaction to the growing dangers of Islam, it also reflects co-existence with Islam and, indeed, an assimilation of several Islamic ideas.³⁶ Echoes of the *Kālacakra*’s

³⁵ Christopher I. Beckwith, *The Tibetan Empire in Central Asia: A History of the Struggle for Great Power among Tibetans, Turks, Arabs, and Chinese during the Early Middle Ages* (Princeton, 1987), pp. 160–62.

³⁶ For some of these see Giacomella Orofino, ‘Apropos of Some Foreign Elements in the *Kālacakratantra*’, in Helmut Krasser et al. (eds), *Tibetan Studies: Proceedings of the 7th Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies, Graz 1995*, vol. 2 (Vienna, 1997), pp. 717–24 and Alexander Berzin, ‘Holy Wars in Buddhism and Islam: The Myth of Shambhala’; ‘The Kalachakra Presentation of the Prophets of the Non-Indic Invaders’; ‘Religious Conversion in Shambhala’, all in *The Berzin Archives*, available online: www.berzinarchives.com.

references to Islam are found in later Tibetan literature. One such case is found in the writings of the sixteenth-century author Tāranātha. In his account of how Islam began, Tāranātha recounts that Muhammad was in fact a Buddhist disciple who had lost his faith in the Dharma, violated his vows and was subsequently expelled from the *sangha*. Later he:

Concealed himself under the name Ma-ma-thar, changed his robes, composed the *mleccha* scripture preaching violence and kept it concealed in the place of Bi-śli-mi-lil, the great demon ...

The story then continues (in quite a peculiar way!) and then Tāranātha tells us:

[fol. 42b] Along with a thousand attendants, he became the sage of the *mlecchas* under the name Bai-kham-pa [Pai kham pa]. He went to the region in the vicinity of Makha city.³⁷

Here we encounter another sphere of loan-words: the religious. In addition to the words which have come from the *Kālacakra* (via the Sanskrit), such as the mention of Mecca and the ‘mantra’ Bismillāh, here we encounter another interesting word – the word Tāranātha uses for the name of the sage of the Muslims, Pai kham pa. The Tibetan here is derived from the Persian word for ‘prophet’, *paygambar* (P: پیغمبر).³⁸ We may also note that the name used here for Muhammad is different from that which is known in the Sanskrit *Kālacakra* literature – Madhumatī (and its Tibetan equivalent, sbrang rtsi’i blo gros).³⁹ This sphere of loan-word usage seems to reflect direct contacts with Muslims, which at this time existed not only in neighbouring countries, such as Mughal India, but also in Tibet itself.

Religious conversion becomes a key issue in later narratives, although it is often not clear whether they are historical or mythical. Important accounts of religious conversion can be found among the Tibetan Kashmiri Muslim community, who trace their arrival to Tibet to the time of the Fifth Dalai Lama (1617-82). An oral tradition which has previously been recounted by Marc Gaborieau, tells the story in which Khayr al-Dīn secretly converted the

³⁷ Tāranātha’s *History of Buddhism in India*, trans. Lama Chimpa and Alaka Chattopadhyaya (Delhi, 1997): pp. 117-18. This account has been mentioned by Cabezón. See: José Ignacio Cabezón, ‘Islam in the Tibetan Cultural Sphere’, in Abdul Wahid Radhu, *Islam in Tibet: Tibetan Caravans*, Louisville, KY, 1997, pp. 13-34, note 45 at pp. 30-1.

³⁸ See Laufer, ‘Loan Words in Tibetan’, p. 481.

³⁹ I have not come across this form of Muhammad’s name in other Tibetan sources. The more common form, as it appears in the *Kālacakra* literature is Ma-dhu-ma-ti. For appearances of this form see John Newman, ‘Islam in the Kālacakra Tantra’, *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*, 21 (1998): pp. 311-71, at p. 333.

Fifth Dalai Lama to Islam, after defeating him in a competition of magic.⁴⁰ In Gaborieau's contribution here, the presence of Muslims in Tibet before the time of the Fifth Dalai Lama's reign is testified by Portuguese missionaries in Tibet in the early seventeenth century.

With clearly documented Muslim presence in and around Tibet from this period onwards, the evidence of Buddhist-Muslims relations is attested to in various forms. Some of these are discussed here by Papas, Zarcone and Elverskog. Papas and Zarcone deal with the genre of conversion narratives, stemming from areas where Buddhism and Islam were in actual close contact. These narratives of conversion tread, as Papas puts it, 'a delicate path between history and legend along collective memory and representation'. He relates these conversion narratives to a broader tradition among the Muslims of the Himalayas and Central Asia – the tradition of secret conversion to Islam of prominent Buddhist figures.

Some of the ways in which historical accounts of religious encounters have been perceived and shaped throughout the last millennium by particular agendas, specific to time and place, is evidenced in Elverskog's essay here. Throughout the periods Elverskog describes, two points emerge as the main reasons for Islam and Buddhism's representation of the other as 'evil': one is particular political agendas, and the other ignorance. The narration of religious interactions along lines of 'clash of civilizations' is found both in Buddhist sources from the eighth century onwards⁴¹ and in much Western scholarship.

Throughout this collection there are various discussions of the role of intermediary cultures. This includes, certainly, the Islamic culture as whole, spreading from Samarkand to Cordova, but also, more specifically, the Persian language (Gaborieau, Bray), the role of Kashmir and Kashmiris (Bray, Melikian-Chirvani and van Bladel) and the role of Uyghur culture (Zieme).

Gaborieau discusses the role of Muslims and of the Persian language as an intermediary between Tibet and the West. Focusing on the use of Persian language for Portuguese missionaries, he discusses its importance in shaping Western understanding of Buddhism. John Bray discusses the mediation role of the Persian language, particularly as used by Kashmiris, for the dissemination of knowledge about Tibet. Although focusing on one case from the nineteenth century, many of the points of cultural intermediaries raised in his essay are also relevant for earlier times: the way in which commerce and diplomacy are intertwined in various forms of mediation; and the way Kashmiris, with their international network, and bilingual skills in Tibetan and Persian, served as important cultural intermediaries.

In present-day Tibet, there are three different Muslim groups: Muslims whose origins are in Kashmir, Ladakh and India, Muslims whose ancestors came

⁴⁰ Marc Gaborieau, *Récit d'un Voyageur Musulman au Tibet* (Paris, 1973).

⁴¹ See Leonard van der Kuijp, 'The Earliest Indian Reference to Muslims in a Buddhist Philosophical Text of circa 700', *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, 34 (2006): pp. 169-202.

from China, and Tibetan converts to Islam. These groups, and how they relate to the modern Chinese general category of *hui* is the focus of Diana Altner's contribution. Another contemporary aspect is presented here by Jan Magnusson, who discusses the intertwining of the political and cultural agendas of the contemporary Baltistan Movement. Demonstrating how tradition is mobilized as a strategy in the reassertion of a cultural, political and regional identity, he discusses how the Baltistan movement, whose membership is made up mostly by Muslims, has mobilized historical narratives of Greater Ladakh, emphasizing the link with 'Old Tibet'. He analyses their struggle to reintroduce Tibetan script and the production and promotion of the very popular pop *ghazals* within this context. These contemporary issues have their resonance in the historical parts of the book. The juxtaposition of the historical and the contemporary in this collection may help us to further understand the multiple facets of the interactions discussed in these essays.