

## 13. ALAINS

*alains* FB, FC<sup>1</sup>*alani* F, P, VA, VB; G, R*alau* VL*allani* VA*alguni (christiani)* V

The Alans, an Iranian speaking people, make their appearance as « Alani » (later sometimes « Halani » Greek Ἁλανοί), in classical literature in the first half of the 1st cent. A.D.; the confederation of their tribes seems to have extended, then or somewhat later, from north of the Aral Sea to the basin of the Don.

The name occurs also in Chinese texts at an early date. It has often been said that, according to the *Hou-Han shu* (5th cent.), the name of the kingdom of 奄蔡 Yen-ts'ai, said to represent Aorsoi, was changed to that of 阿蘭那 A-lan-na (ROCKHILL, *Rubruck*, 88; Y<sup>1</sup>, III, 186; IV, 271; « A-lan-ya », which occurs twice, is a slip or a misprint in *Br*, II, 87). But, first, the equivalence Yen-ts'ai = Aorsoi is far from evident phonetically (cf. *TP*, 1923, 132). Again the *Hou-Han shu* has no A-lan-na, only A-lan-liao [聊], which has passed into *Ts'ê-fu yüan-kuei*, 961, 3 b, and *T'ung chih*, 196, 25 b. The reading A-lan-na, quoted by Abel RÉMUSAT (*Nouv. Mém. asiat.*, I, 239) from *Wên-hsien t'ung-k'ao* (338, 4 a), goes back in fact to Tu Yu's *T'ung-tien* (compiled from 766 to 801; 193, 2 a), from which it has passed into *T'ai-p'ing yü-lan* (793, 9 a), *T'ai-p'ing huan-yü chi* (183, 7 a) and *Wên-hsien t'ung-k'ao*; it is clearly a case of clerical error, one way or the other. But the *Hou-Han shu* copies here the *Wei lio* of the first half of the 3rd cent. A.D., and the *Wei lio* has only « the kingdom of Yen-ts'ai which is also called A-lan ». As the *Wei lio* names also a kingdom of 柳 Liu, it is clear, as CHAVANNES pointed out already in 1905 (*TP*, 1905, 559; 1907, 195), that it is that Liu which, in the form *liao*, is an erroneous addition to A-lan in the *Hou-Han shu*, and the A-lan-na of the *T'ung-tien* is in its turn a corruption of the false name A-lan-liao. We must read A-lan = Alani, in all passages. As to the change of name from Yen-ts'ai to A-lan, I take it to mean that, about the beginning of the Christian era, the supremacy in the Aral region had passed from the Yen-ts'ai tribes to the Alans proper. In the same way texts tell us that the name of the country later became Su-t'ê, *i. e.* Soydak (the « T'ê-su » still quoted by CHARPENTIER, *ZDMG*, 1917, 365, is a late interversion of characters); this does not mean that the Alans and the Sogdians are identical.

On the authority of DE GUIGNES, *Hist. gén. des Huns*, II, 279, and of VIVIEN DE SAINT-MARTIN, *Et. de géogr. anc.*, Paris, 1850, I, Les Alains, 109-110, CHARPENTIER (*loc. cit.* 361) says that, according to Chinese texts, the A-lan were so called « from the Altai mountains, from which they came originally », and does not shrink from bringing in also the Manchu word *alin*, « mountain ». But there is not one word in Chinese texts as to the origin of « A-lan »; DE GUIGNES and VIVIEN DE SAINT-MARTIN have simply, and vainly, tried to account for the sentence in Ammianus Marcellinus, « . . . Halani . . . , ex montium appellatione cognominati », by « Altai » or « alin ».

Apart from the *Wei lio* (and the *Hou-Han shu* copying the *Wei lio*), I know only of one independent mention of the A-lan in Chinese texts before the Mongol period. It is true that the