

in weight, two hundred tents, men-servants and maid-servants, two hundred shields of elephant-hide, as many Indian swords mounted in gold and ornamented with gold and precious stones of great value, as many horses suitable for kings, and one thousand loads of the finest gold and silver, for in this country are situated the mountains wherefrom they dig gold. The wall of that city is built of gold ore, and likewise the habitations of the people; and from this place Solomon, the son of David, brought the gold with which he built the sanctuary, and he made the vessels and the shields of the gold of the land of China.<sup>1</sup> In the history of Alexander the Great contained in the "Universal History" of al-Makīn, who died at Damascus in 1273-74, a distinction is made between the kings of Nearer China and Farther China.<sup>2</sup>

The most naïve version of Alexander's adventures in China is contained in the legendary "History of the Kings of Persia," written in Arabic by al-Ta'ālibī (961-1038).<sup>3</sup> Here, the king of China is taken aback, and loses his sleep when Alexander with his army enters China. Under cover of night he visits Alexander, offering his submission in order to prevent bloodshed. Alexander first demands the revenue of his kingdom for five years, but gradually condescends to accept one third for one year. The following day a huge force of Chinese troops surrounds the army of Alexander, who believes his end has come, when the king of China appears, descending from his horse and kissing the soil (!). Alexander charges him with perfidy, which the king of China denies. "What, then, does this army mean?"—"I wanted to show thee," the king of China replied, "that I did not submit from weakness or owing to the small number of my forces. I had observed that the superior world favored thee and allowed thee to triumph over more powerful kings than thou. Whoever combats the superior world will be vanquished. For this reason I wanted to submit to the superior world by submitting to thee, and humbly to obey it by obeying thee and complying with thy orders." Alexander rejoined, "No demand should be made of a man like thee. I never met any one more qualified as a sage. Now I abandon all my claims upon thee and depart." The king of China responded, "Thou wilt lose nothing by this arrangement." He then despatched rich presents to him, like a thousand pieces of silk, painted silk, brocade, silver, sable-skins, etc., and pledged himself to pay an annual tribute. Although the whole story, of course, is pure invention, Chinese methods of overcoming an enemy by superior diplomacy are not badly characterized.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 179.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 369, 394.

<sup>3</sup> H. ZOTENBERG, *Histoire des rois des Perses*, pp. 436-440.