

Arabs, but they too built on the system of Ptolemy. They knew of Tibet, but had very vague ideas in the matter. In the year 851, the name of the mysterious country is mentioned by the merchant Suleiman, but it is the musk-trade that awakens his greatest interest. Through the trade that the Caliphs of Bagdad carried on with India and China, the Arabs came into closer contact with the more distant countries. Ibn Khordadbeh speaks cursorily of Tibet, so also does Al Ya 'kubi in the year 880. Masudi visited India in 912 and lets us suspect that he had some notion of the lake Manasarovar. He endeavours to fix the situation of the sources of the Panjab rivers, and touches as lightly as his predecessors on the name of Tibet. Ibn Haukal and Alberuni are not able to designate more distinctly the place of this realm, but the latter quotes the statements of the Indian Puranas about the land to the North.

Edrisi wrote in the year 1154. For any one seeking for information about the hydrography of South-western Tibet, he is the most valuable and most surprising among the Arabian geographers. His writings are, however, of no easy interpretation. Also in his statements we are allowed to get a glimpse of Manasarovar, the holy lake of the Hindoos. By Tibet he meant in reality Ladak, as did many of his predecessors. In 1340, Ibn Batuta travelled in these parts. According to him, the mountains of Assam are connected with the Tibetan ranges where the »musk-gazelles» are to be found.

Later Mohammedan authors have not much to add above what has already been told by their predecessors. Mirza Haidar, who travelled in 1533, is the first one able to give us anything positive out of his own experience. But the result is slight, and the geographical names difficult to identify. The Emperor Akbar gave his attention for both practical and religious reasons to geographic investigation, inside as well as outside the borders of his empire. He caused a work to be published, called *Ain-i-Akbari*, which is flowing over with information about India. Of special interest to us are the descriptions of the hydrographical system of the great Indian rivers. But even to the author of *Ain-i-Akbari*, the conception of Tibet only covered Ladak and Baltistan.

The Chinese form a splendid exception from the nebulous obscurity in which other Oriental nations have floated with regard to their knowledge of Tibet. Their politics, their trade and, not least, their sense of geographical realities, brought them to this point long before the name of Tibet was known in Europe. Also the desire for religious research has induced Chinese buddhists, such as Fa-Hian and Hiuen-Tsang to admirable journeys in the interior of Asia. I am coming back to their