

Abbé RENAUDOT is the first scholar who made Europe acquainted with the works of the Arabs upon India and the countries adjacent. And curiously enough, his translation deals with the earliest of the Arab geographers about India.<sup>1</sup> In his remarks Renaudot tells us that merchants from Mesopotamia and Persia used to travel overland viâ Couzistan to Tibet or China, and that in his own days the great trade with Tibetan musk took place through the kingdom of Buthan, »which must be a part of ancient Tibet, or the country under the Khacan of Tibet». Regarding the situation of Tibet in relation to China he says of his two authors: »Ils remarquent aussi que le Royaume de Tibet, Tobit, ou Tobat, comme prononcent les Arabes, n'en est pas fort esloigné: & que le país des Tagazgaz le borne du costé de l'Orient.»<sup>2</sup>

In 1845 REINAUD published his edition of the same work which is especially remarkable for its excellent introductory commentary. He showed that the work did not contain the narratives of two travellers as Renaudot had believed, but only of one, the merchant SULEIMAN, whose account was compiled in 851 A. D., just at the time when the commercial communications between the Empire of the Caliphs of Bagdad and India and China were at their highest point of activity. The second author, ABU SAID, never visited India and China. All that he had to relate had been reported to him by others.

That part of India with which the Arabs had the least communication was Hindustan proper, or the country traversed by the Jumna and Ganges, that is to say, from Panjab to the gulf of Bengal.<sup>3</sup> Therefore the Arabs had only a vague idea of Assam and the Brahmaputra. The principal object of Suleiman's narrative was to make known the road which was travelled by the merchants of Bagdad, Basra and Siraf on their way to China, a road which also had been taken by Suleiman.

The merchant Suleiman mentions Tibet in the following passages:

En deçà de la Chine sont le pays des Tagazgaz,<sup>4</sup> peuple de race turke, et le Khakan du Tibet. Voilà ce qui termine la Chine du côté du pays des Turks . . . La Chine, du côté du soleil couchant, a pour limite la ville appelée Madou, sur les frontières du Tibet. La Chine et le Tibet sont dans un état d'hostilités continuelles. Quelqu'un de ceux qui ont fait le voyage de Chine nous a dit y avoir vu un homme qui portait sur son dos du musc dans une outre; cet homme était parti de Samarkand, et avait franchi à pied la distance qui sépare son pays de la Chine. Il était venu de ville en ville jusqu'à Khanfou,<sup>5</sup> place où se dirigent les marchands de Syraf. Le pays où vit la chevre qui fournit le musc de Chine, et le Tibet, ne forment qu'une seule et

<sup>1</sup> Anciennes Relations des Indes et de la Chine, de deux Voyageurs Mahometans, qui y allerent, dans le neuvième siècle; traduites d'arabe: avec des Remarques sur les principaux endroits de ces Relations. Paris 1718.

<sup>2</sup> Op. cit. p. 179, 222 and 252.

<sup>3</sup> REINAUD, op. cit. p. XLVIII.

<sup>4</sup> The country of the Turkish Hwéi-hu; RICHTHOFEN op. cit., p. 565.

<sup>5</sup> REINAUD identifies Khanfou with Hang-tcheo-fou, and Madou with Amdou or Amdo, a name he knows from della Penna.