

And then follows a confused story about Alexander, who, having beaten Porus, remained seven months in India but sent his armies towards Tibet and China. Some of his emissaries returned and reported that all the kings of the east had submitted. Then Alexander left one of his generals with 30,000 men in India, and marched himself with the greatest part of his army towards Tibet. The king of Tibet met him and submitted, after which Alexander asked him to guide him to the Turks living in the deserts. The king of Tibet obeyed at once and went before on the road to China, followed by Alexander and his army. Having arrived at the frontier of China Alexander was received by the Chinese king who submitted. Then Alexander remained in the country until he had founded a city called »Tower of Stone«.

This description at any rate shows us that Ibn Khordadbeh cannot be said to have known the situation of Tibet. For if there was any country in the interior of Asia about which Alexander and his generals had not the slightest knowledge, even from hearsay, it was Tibet. At one place Ibn Khordadbeh makes the Oxus take its origin from the mountains of Tibet, an expression that can be defended if, with some generosity, we extend the appellation Tibet north-westwards from Baltistan (Little Tibet), over Kanjut and Hunza-Nagar in the direction of the Pamir. But this does not help us, for later on when he describes Alexander's march, Tibet, the deserts of the Turks, and China are mixed up in a very strange manner. Or did he believe that Alexander went from western Tibet through eastern Turkestan to China?

At another place he changes the Oxus into one branch of a river which starts from the mountains of China. The other branch is the Indus. He also makes the Indus a branch of the Oxus, and says that the Indus takes its origin from the mountains of Schikinân. I do not know what Schikinân is, — perhaps Shugnan? This is so much the more likely, as he speaks of a ford in the Oxus which takes the traveller to the country of the Schikinâns. Therefore it must be at the upper Oxus or Panj.

We must willingly forgive Ibn Khordadbeh that he, who had never visited the country himself, could not possibly make out this most intricate labyrinth of rivers, mountains and valleys which constitutes the rocky country between western Tibet and Pamir, a country that only lately has been brought in order on our own maps. He may have got his information from merchants who told him that it was only three days' journey from the upper Oxus to the upper Indus, and he has imagined a bifurcation from a common source.¹

Ibn Khordadbeh's statement as to the origin of the famous river is so far of the greatest interest and importance, that he takes a great step in the right direc-

¹ The fact that he places the source of the Indus in the same region where the Oxus takes its rise, or say, in Shugnan, is not more surprising than RENNELL's placing the source of the Indus a little north of Byltæ (Baltistan), and S. E. of »Pamer Plain«, remembering that 900 years separate both. And even after RENNELL, a Russian, CHERNISCHEFF, has placed the source of the Indus in the mountains west of Kashgar. RENNELL's Herodotus, map, p. 229.