

One is lost in this stream of positive geography which has such a fascinating resemblance to the truth. Edrisi provides an indication about the sources originally used for the details he gives regarding Tibet, Bagharghar and the country of the Khizildjis: »Nous en parlerons d'après ce qu'offrent de plus certain et de plus authentique les livres écrits et composés sous la dictée de Turks qui, ayant traversé ces pays ou ayant habité dans leur voisinage, ont pu rapporter ce qu'ils en savaient.»<sup>1</sup> But could these Turks really describe what they had seen? And were those who took down the notes not liable to misunderstandings? Such an able man as Grueber who saw a good deal of these countries with his own eyes hundreds of years later, could not describe them sufficiently well to make it possible for others to follow his routes in detail on the map. Even Abbé HUC, 700 years after Edrisi, is very vague in the most interesting portion of his journey, and still he had studied the country from autopsy, while Edrisi presents us with third or fourth hand knowledge.

It may seem audacious to try and bring his geography in accordance with our present map of Tibet, but I cannot help making a few suggestions.<sup>2</sup>

As I have pointed out before, he very likely refers, as a rule, only to Ladak and western Tibet, or to the region which in about 1150 obeyed the king of Ladak. Ladak is even now called Tibet by the Mohammedans; and Leh is simply called Tebbet by the natives or Eastern Turkestan. Edrisi says that the great city of Tibet is the capital in the country of Tibet which is inhabited by Tibetan Turks, all of which coincides exactly with the actual state of things, remembering that the

<sup>1</sup> Op. cit. Tome I p. 490.

<sup>2</sup> I must also use this opportunity to make good a grave mistake I made years ago before I had ever seen Tibet. Only on account of a certain resemblance of words, I wrote to Baron von Richtigofen, quoting Edrisi: »Sollte nun unter Berwan der Karaburan Prshevalsky's zu verstehen sein, so könnte man das halbkreisförmige Gebirge als den Altyn-tagh deuten. Allein, wenn die Stadt Buthinkh der Araber Khotan sein soll, so genügen die fünf Tagereisen nicht, um den See zu erreichen . . .» Dr. Sven Hedin's Forschungsreise nach dem Lop-nor. Januar bis Mai 1896. Briefliche Mitteilungen an Herrn v. Richtigofen. Zeitschrift der Gesellschaft für Erdkunde zu Berlin, Bd. XXXI. 1896, p. 352. This is of course absurd and should never have been printed. With a feeling of consolation and surprise I read the following words by Sir THOMAS HOLDICH: »The course of the river on which the town (Tibet) is built, no less than the name of the lake (Berwan) into which that river falls and the description of the Turk slave girls, is quite inapplicable to anything to be found in modern Tibet. I have little doubt that the Tibet of Idrisi was a town on the high-road to China, which followed the Tarim River eastward to its bourne in Lake Burhan. Lake Burhan is now a swamp distinct from Lob, but 1000 years ago it may have been a part of the Lob system, and Bagnarghar a part of Mongolia . . . It is impossible to place the ancient town of Tibet accurately. There are ruined sites in numbers on the Tarim banks, and amongst them a place called Tippak, but it would be dangerous to assume a connection between Tibet and Tippak. This is interesting, because it indicates that modern Chinese Turkistan was included in Tibet a thousand years ago . . .» The Gates of India being an historical narrative by Colonel Sir Thomas Holdich. London 1910, p. 282. Regarding the identification of Berwan as Kara-buran, it is curious that two writers could fall upon such an extraordinary idea.

The matter should not be complicated more than necessary. When Edrisi happens to say quite correctly that Tibet borders upon China proper and on different portions of India it is hard to see how it could be a town on the banks of the Tarim.