

Au milieu du continent méridional du monde sont les plus hautes cimes des grands monts neigeux, appelés Thsoug ling (montagnes de l'Oignon)¹; à l'orient de ces cimes se trouve l'empire de Tchintan², ou la Chine; au sud est le Thiantchu³, ou, l'Hindoustân, à l'ouest le royaume de Phoszu⁴, ou la Perse; et au nord sont les pays des barbares nomades.⁵

In BUSHELL's translation from the official history of the T'ang dynasty we find a few glimpses of the geography of Eastern Tibet.⁶ Here we are told of an ambassador, LIU YUAN-TING, who, in 822 A. D., was sent by the emperor on a mission to T'u-fan (T'u-po). Some 300 li from the point where he crossed the Yellow River (Hwangho), there were three mountains like circular, flat-bottomed coppers in shape; they were called the Tzū (Purple) Mountains and bound the Greater Yang-t'ung country. »These are the ancient K'unlun Mountains. They are called by the Tibetans the Mênoli Mountains . . . The source of the Yellow River is in the midst of these mountains. The water is very pure and clear, but as it flows past other streams it changes to red; and afterwards, when it has been joined by more tributaries, it gradually becomes yellow and turbid.» Bushell locates the Greater Yang-t'ung on the plateau to the south of Khotan, between the Lesser Yang-t'ung to their west and the T'u-fan (T'u-po) on their east.

Further the Chinese text runs: »The country to the south-west of the Yellow River is flat, like a whetstone — an uncultivated plain, richly covered with grass, with many tamarisk and willow-trees on the banks of the river, while the mountains are covered with cypresses.» The Tsangpo is called »the Tsang River», but only occasionally mentioned.

In the book on pilgrimage, written by I-TSING, who was born in 634, only a very few geographical hints are to be found. It is rather a collection of short biographies of chiefly Chinese Buddhists who, in the second half of the seventh century A. D., went in search of Sanscrit books containing the dogmas of their law. One of these pilgrims was I-Tsing himself. Chavannes who has translated the work is indeed right in saying that it is surprising that in only one generation no fewer than sixty persons could find it worth while to visit the west, and he thinks

¹ Ts'ung-ling.

² Ch'in-tan.

³ T'ien-ch'u.

⁴ P'o-szü.

⁵ Humboldt points to the same fact when discussing his great central Asiatic range which east of the meridian of Khotan gets the name of A-nëu-ta. »Man könnte sich wundern, dass dieser Name gleichfalls sowohl für den berühmten Alpensee Tübet, aus welchem der Sutledj entspringt, als weiterhin noch für einen Berg im Süden des Himalaya gebräuchlich ist; aber man muss beachten, dass die beschreibenden Namen beständig verallgemeinert werden, was für die Geographie sehr gefährlich ist, und dass die Hindus, ehe sie noch die Topographie Tübet kannten, sich mögen eingebildet haben, das goldführende Land des Nordens zwischen dem Kuen-lun und den Heiligen Seen (Ravana-hrada und Manasa) habe man sich als eine wenig breite Region ganz dicht am Himalaya vorzustellen.» A. von Humboldt, Central-Asien. Berlin 1844. I. p. 600.

⁶ The Early History of Tibet. From Chinese Sources. By S. W. Bushell, Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society. N. S., Vol. XII. London 1880, p. 435 et seq.