

great lagoon. With Istakhri, however, we enter upon a new era, a time when the Arabs and Persians rose to a high state of civilization and produced a literature of great excellence. They were especially proficient in geography and related sciences, and have left several works of high accuracy. One of the best of these is that of Istakhri. He corrected the Alexandrine idea of a northern outlet of the Caspian Sea, which, in spite of Ptolemy, was still prevalent. In a journey around the sea he came to Derbent, where he records that the old wall projected into the sea so far that six of its towers stood in the water. Brückner considers that there is good evidence that none of the towers have disappeared, and therefore concludes that about 920 A. D., at the time of Istakhri's visit, the Caspian stood twenty-nine feet higher than the modern mean level, or zero. Now at that date the Oxus quite surely did not enter the Caspian. Istakhri's map shows it as entering the Sea of Aral, whose circumference is said to be one hundred parasangs, nearly four hundred miles. Moreover, Istakhri says distinctly, "Aral receives the Oxus, the Jaxartes, and several other rivers. Nevertheless, one perceives no increase in its waters; and so one supposes a subterranean communication with the Caspian Sea." If there had been a visible communication, he surely would not have made such a supposition. Elsewhere he speaks of the mouth of the Oxus as being ten days' journey, about two hundred and fifty miles, from that of the Jaxartes; but there is no hint of any connection with the Caspian. In describing the lake, he says, "On the shore itself of Aral there is a mountain called Sheghagher, on which snow remains from winter almost to the end of summer." So far as I can learn,