

CHAPTER XVI.

EAST INDIAN TRAVELLERS IN THE SIXTEENTH AND SEVENTEENTH CENTURIES.

A long time should elapse before the Europeans, ANDRADE, GRUEBER and DORVILLE, DESIDERI and FREYRE, and the Capuchin Missionaries visited Tibet. And with some reason Andrade could be said to have discovered the mysterious country, for at this time nobody seems to have remembered the vague information brought back by Odoric. Nor had the wonderful tales of Plano Carpini, Rubruck and Marco Polo made any deep impression in Europe, and Tibet had indeed to be rediscovered.

The name of the country, however, was sometimes, though very rarely, mentioned by travellers who visited India even before Andrade's journey, though they did not know where it was situated any more than did the Arabian geographers.

So much the more attention was attracted by the source of one of the three rivers, which are the object of this historical account, namely, the Indus, and generally in connection with speculations regarding the source of the Ganges. The following representatives of the great class of East India travellers will give an idea of the knowledge about the countries just north of India as possessed by Europe in the second half of the 16th and the first half of the 17th century. All the information they were able to gather was founded on hearsay, and therefore from a geographical point of view of very little value.

When ANTHONY JENKINSON, in 1558, visited the western parts of Central Asia, he only heard that the Oxus had its sources on the mountains of »Paraponisus» in India, and in Bokhara he met merchants who came from »the furthest parts of India, even from the country of Bengala, & the river Ganges»;¹ and amongst the notes RICHARD JOHNSON, a year later, gathered of different roads from Russia to Cathay, we find one, given by a Tartarian merchant in Bokhara that twenty days' journey from Cathay was a country, »where liveth the beast that beareth the best Muske»,² a statement in which we feel, as it were, a smell of distant Tibet.

¹ RICHARD HAKLUYT: *The Principal Navigations Voyages Traffiques & Discoveries* etc. Glasgow 1903, Vol. II, p. 461 and 472.

² *Op. cit.* p. 482.