

CHAPTER XIX.

MAPS OF THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY.

In his essay on the ancient cartography of Japan, Dr. E. W. DAHLGREN says that the earliest geographical knowledge of Nipon partly consists of verbal accounts, and partly of maps.¹ With Tibet the case is so far different that the representation on maps occurred only some 500 years after the first news of the existence of a country with this name reached Europe, and this news is chiefly gained by the same great traveller who the first of all Europeans made known the existence of Chipangu. Turning his attention to the cartography Dr. Dahlgren points out the importance of arranging the existing material in systematic order, and of fixing the different characteristic types.² This sound principle is no doubt easier to follow for a student of Japan, a group of Islands in the sea, with coast-lines which have gradually been mapped in a more and more detailed way during the course of centuries, — than for a student of a country like Tibet, surrounded by land, and lost behind inaccessible mountain fortifications, heard of by several travellers, approached by some, and visited or even crossed by a very few, of whom not a single one has so much as tried to give a map of his route, and, at the most, delivered a very meagre and confused account of what they have seen.

Under such conditions it would be a useless task to try and force the early maps of the country north of Himalaya into a system showing a regular development from one type to another, from one epoch to the next. The first rule I can follow is to trace the influence of PTOLEMY until it fades away under the weight of innovations introduced by GASTALDI and others. Further it may be said that MERCATOR represents a special type, on account of the singular way in which he draws

¹ Les débuts de la cartographie du Japon, Archives d'études orientales, publiées par J.-A. Lundell. Upsal 1911, p. 15.

² «Il importe de distinguer les traits qui caractérisent chacun de ces types, de démontrer leur origine, de déterminer leur âge respectif et de suivre leur évolution afin de noter comment quelques-uns disparaissent sans laisser de traces, tandis que d'autres reçoivent une impulsion nouvelle, rejetant les excroissances étrangères et prennent des formes qui se rapprochent toujours davantage de la réalité.» Ibidem p. 14.