

CHAPTER XXII.

TIBET IN EUROPEAN BOOKS AND NARRATIVES OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.

It would be a very useless and unnecessary task to try and pick out from all geographical works of the seventeenth century the passages which deal with Tibet. The result of so much trouble would be very disappointing. And after the examination we should feel obliged to admit that the knowledge about this country had gained very little in the course of one hundred years. The brilliant travels of Andrade and Grueber, which are now so easy to follow, could not be placed on the maps existing, as clearly proved by the attempt of Father Kircher. Other information had been gathered by Jesuit missionaries, but was either not published, or published at a much later date.

The present chapter has therefore only one object: to give an idea of the store of knowledge possessed by European geographers, and for this purpose a few examples will be quite sufficient. The ordinary way in which the geographers save themselves from all difficulties is to copy the words of their predecessors from the classics and Marco Polo down to Ramusio, Roë and Terry. One of the passages which are copied over and over again is the one in *Libro Odoardo Barbosa Portoghese*, where the sacredness of the Ganges, in the religious opinion of the Hindus, as well as the source of the river as situated in the terrestrial paradise, is described.¹ Such is also the case with the passage in NICOLO DI CONTI's narrative where he speaks of the marvellous lake between the Indus and the Ganges.² From BARROS' assertion regarding the Chiamay lake, first published in Ramusio's work a traditional mistake of 150 years took its origin.

In some books one also recognises the eloquent description Father JARRIC

¹ A questo fiume Gange vano tutti gl' Indiani in peregrinaggio con gran diuotione à lauarsi, perche hanno firmissima fede, che da poi lauati, siano netti di tutti li lor peccati, & per questo salui, concio sia cosa, che il detto fiume vien da vn fonte, il qual ha il suo principio nel paradiso terrestre. — Ramusio, Primo volume Delle Navigazioni et Viaggi, Venetia MDLIII, p. 349, c. The following passage is no doubt taken from Conti: »There is also a lake lying between the Indus and the Ganges, the water of which possesses a remarkable flavour, and is drunk with great pleasure. All the inhabitants of that district, and even those living at a great distance, flock to this lake for the purpose of procuring the water. By means of relays of carriers mounted on horse-back, they draw the water fresh every day.» *India in the Fifteenth Century*, edited by R. H. Major. London, Hakluyt Society, 1857, p. 22.

² *Op. cit.* p. 378, c. See above p. 175.