

CHAPTER XXV.

LAGO DE CHIAMAY.

Before proceeding further in our researches in the development of the knowledge of Tibet during the first third of the eighteenth century, we have to go back in time and try to trace the history of the extraordinary cartographical phenomenon, which, at its first appearance, was baptized as Lago de Chiamay, and then, with insignificant variations of name, and with admirable pertinacity, remained on nearly all maps for some 160 years.

I will first lay before the reader the material that has been available to me, and then draw the conclusions to which it may lead. It makes no pretensions of being complete, but it is sufficient for the conclusions to which I allude.

Under the heading *Della historia del Signor Giovan de Barros*¹ we find in Ramusio's *Navigazioni et Viaggi*, 1550, a short communication, — and still the most complete in existence, concerning the lake Chiamay;² he has been speaking of the sixth division of Asia and of the town of Malaca, and then goes on to describe a very mighty river which flows through the whole of Pegu³ and which comes from Lago di Chiamay, 200 leagues distant to the north in the interior of the country, and in which six notable rivers take their origin. Three of these join to form the great river which flows straight through the Kingdom of Siam,⁴ while the other three fall into the Gulf of Bengal. One of these crosses the Kingdom of Caor, from which it derives its name, further through the Kingdom of Comotay and Cirote, after which it empties itself, above Chatigan, in the great branch of the Ganges straight across the island of Sornagan; the second, the one of Pegu, flows through the Kingdom of Aua,⁵ and the third goes out at Martaban, between Tauay and Pegu, at 15° N. lat.⁶

¹ Barros was born in 1496 at Vizeu in Portugal. In 1533 he was nominated, by King John III as a Treasurer and General Agent of India. In 1541 he was ordered to write a history of India, a work that was continued after his death (in 1570) and published at Lisbon.

² I have at my disposal the edition of 1554, where the passage is read on p. 432, D.

³ Irrawaddi.

⁴ Menam.

⁵ Irrawaddi.

⁶ Salwen.