

and the Ki-chu were one and the same river. But Desideri had followed the Tsangpo the whole way from near its source, and we shall see in a later chapter that he knew perfectly well which was the head river and which the tributary.

By far the greatest part of Desideri's narrative is a description of the cult and religion of the Tibetans, which is not less admirable than the geographical part. I have quoted above only those parts of his observations which are of importance for this historical sketch. They will be sufficient to prove that Desideri's work is one of the best and one of the most reliable ever written on Tibet and that it leaves far behind it the contemporary narratives of Beligatti and della Penna.

Desideri must be regarded as the first European traveller who has visited and described the Manasarovar, and at all events he is the European discoverer of the Kailas. He is the first explorer in recent times to start the question and controversy about the situation of the source of the Indus, a problem which should become finally solved only 200 years later. It must, however, be confessed that he has conjectured the situation of the source of the Indus very near its real place. He was the first to start the problem of the source of the Ganges, which should be solved more than a hundred years later on. He was told that the sacred river originated from the Manasarovar, but from his own observations arrived at the conclusion that the real source was situated on the Kailas. By a curious coincidence he makes the same mistake as the Lamas, confusing the Satlej with the Ganges. Even on Kircher's map we have seen the Ganges start from a lake which must be the Manasarovar. Here it is a pity that Desideri mentions no name at all. If he had used the expression «il fiume» as he does for the Tsangpo, he would have left the question open whether the river entering the Manasarovar and leaving the lake again were the Ganges or any other river. But already the fact that he knows a river issuing from the Manasarovar is important enough. This proves that the superfluous water of the Manasarovar in the winter of 1715—16 ran over to Rakas-tal through the channel. And as the river issuing from the sacred lake was known to proceed to India, we get through Desideri an indirect, though reliable proof, that the Satlej also went out of Rakas-tal in 1715—16. He has given a very correct and clear account of the pilgrimages to the sacred mount and lake. Beyond doubt he is the first European who ever crossed the famous and important pass of Maryum-la. If his Toscioa is identical with the present Tokchen, and his Serchià identical with Nain Sing's Sarka and Ryder's and my Saka-dsong, Desideri can hardly have used any other road than the one crossing Maryum-la. This is the more likely as he travelled in company with a native princess and all her followers, who certainly only would use the most comfortable road, and even this road seems to have been too much for the princess, as she became ill on the way. Professor N. KUEHNER positively says Desideri went over Maryum-la, although this is only conjecture.<sup>1</sup> With the new

<sup>1</sup> Opisanie Tibeta, Vladivostok 1907, Part I, p. 36.