

Kawaguchi has no high idea about the Europeans who have travelled in Tibet.¹ He mentions only Rockhill, Csoma de Körös and myself. As to Csoma I have never heard any European pretend that he had »spent many years in Lhasa».

We leave him now. Priests are often wonderful people. Abbé Huc's book reads like a romance. Kawaguchi's is very romantic also, and though he dislikes the western explorers we cannot help liking him and his lonely ways through the land of the Lamas. In the geographical world of the West such exploration as the following is, however, not accepted: »I wished to take a north-easterly direction, so as to reach a certain post-town; but having no compass, I could not ascertain my bearings, and seem to have strayed off to the south-east and eventually due south, instead of north-east, as I should have done.»² Kawaguchi has not cleared up a single geographical problem. He has unintentionally and in a harmless way turned some of the facts we have known for years upside down. He has no idea of absolute heights, distances, dimensions of rivers and lakes and carries not even a compass with him. Where we knew the water running from the Manasarovar to the Rakas-tal, he makes it run the opposite way. Where the Kubi-tsangpo is some 30 yards broad he makes it over a mile. To him Gaurisankar, Chomo Lhari and Mount Everest are one and the same peak. So it cannot be said to be an exaggerated compliment to Burrard and Hayden, Ryder and Rawling, Waddell and some other British experts and travellers to say that Kawaguchi's book is »probably the best and most up-to-date description of a country which is bound for some time to come to exercise a mysterious fascination over the Western reader.»³ To the mysterious author of these words Tibet will certainly for ever remain a mystery.

¹ Op. cit. p. 403 et seq.

² Op. cit. p. 195. — Poetry may, perhaps, sometimes be welcome even in geography, but such verses as the following cannot be allowed for the *tasam* in the middle of July:

»Upon these plains of snow, my bed is snow, my pillow snow; my food also the same; And this my snowy journey, full of pain.»

³ Geographical Journal, Vol. XXXV, March 1910, p. 325.

Still Kawaguchi's contribution to our knowledge of Tibetan geography is more valuable than the following words about my discovery and determination of the sources of the Indus, Satlej and Brahmaputra: »we hold that claims to have found the true source of this river or that are of little value. The source or sources of every river are the areas of the catchment basin, the ultimate source being the rain or snowfall. One source or channel may carry more water one day, another more the next, and to dogmatize as to one stream rather than another being the true source of a river is unprofitable at any time, and probably incorrect till minute and accurate surveys have been made and discharges observed.» Geographical Journal, March 1910, p. 324.

The determination of the source is never of little value. In the case of a river with such old and great fame as the Brahmaputra it may even be very important to know where and how it is born. A systematic and scientific search for such a source is no dogmatizing and it is not at any time unprofitable to solve definitely such a problem, especially not in our days when very few of the great rivers remain unknown as far as their sources are concerned. Or can it be said that Lord Curzon's extremely clever and learned monograph: »The Pamirs and the Source of the Oxus» (Geographical Journal, July, August and September 1896), has been unprofitable? During a rainy summer one branch of the upper Tsangpo may be greater than others one day, and the next another may be greater. But during a summer like 1907 the conditions are the same all over the area of the catchment basin. And it is absolutely certain that under all conditions and whatever weather it may be, the Kubi-tsangpo is always the greatest.