

CHAPTER XXXVIII

THE TSANGPO AND ITS TRIBUTARIES AS REPRESENTED BY THE CATHOLIC MISSIONARIES AND VAN DE PUTTE.

We now proceed to consider, historically, the exploration of the tributaries of the Tsangpo above Ki-chu. It was my good fortune to survey some 5 or 6 of them, which had hitherto been partially or totally unknown. Except the Ki-chu, Shang-chu and Raga-tsangpo, nothing more was known of the rest than a few miles of their course, reckoned from the confluence. D'Anville's map and the Ta-ch'ing map are very rich in tributaries both north and south of the main river, but they are very badly drawn and in some cases impossible to identify. European maps of later years have not considered them at all, but preferred to leave the whole country north of the Tsangpo blank.

The Catholic missionaries who, either by journeys through Tibet or by prolonged stationary work in Lhasa, came so much in contact with the great river, contributed, nevertheless, very little to the knowledge of the Tsangpo and its tributaries. GRUEBER does not even mention it from his journey between Lhasa and Langur. On the map (Vol. I, Pl. XI), in ATHANASIUS KIRCHER's work¹ it is even difficult to identify the main river itself. On GASTALDI's map (Vol. I, Pl. XVII), the Brahmaputra disappears altogether. DELLA PENNA and GEORGI hardly do more than mention the existence of the Tzangc'ü.

Even DESIDERI who has given such an interesting narrative of his journey and who had better opportunity than any other European, before Ryder and Rawling, to see the river and follow its course the whole way from Maryum-la to Chetang, has very little to tell.² What he says of the Ki-chu is not easy to understand: »Lhasa is situated in the middle of a great plain, which is surrounded by high mountains from which flows a great river, that coming from the western regions, runs to the south, very near the mentioned city and afterwards takes an eastern

¹ La Chine Illustrée de plusieurs Monuments etc. Amsterdam 1670. Vide Vol. I, p. 165 et seq.

² Vide above, Vol. I, p. 276 et seq.