

Finally there is a short paragraph about the mountains of Tibet, where we as usual miss the Kara-korum, though a part of the eastern Transhimalaya is at least mentioned:

Mountains. Thibet is not only a very elevated, but also a mountainous country. But if we can rely on Chinese authorities, it does not possess any of those lofty and extensive ranges of mountains, which are commonly represented as forming one of its most prominent features. If, indeed, with Malte-Brun, we include the kingdoms of Boutan, Nepaul and Gorka among the component parts of Thibet, then we must acknowledge it to possess the most majestic and lofty mountains in the world — the great Himalaya chain, which forms the southern support of all the elevated tracts of central Asia. But as these kingdoms do not appertain either to the Dalai-lama or the Bantchin-erdeni, nor yet are in any way comprehended among the possessions of China, they do not come within our present province. We therefore confine our remarks to those mountains which we find laid down with certainty in our maps.

The principal of these are the following: the Nomkhoun-oubashi chain, situated on the north of H'lassa, from whence it stretches north-eastward, to the frontiers of Koko-nor, the Langbou mountains, on the north of Chashi-lounbou; the Chour-moutsangula chain on the north of Dingghie, Jounghia, and Nielan and south-east of Chashi-lounbou; and the Kang tise or Kentaisse chain, on the north of Ari, with its branches, the Sengkeh and Langtsien mountains; the former of which is on the north, and the latter on the south of the main chain. All these mountains give rise to various branches and tributaries of the Yarou-tsangbo. The great elevation of Thibet renders its climate extremely cold; and its mountainous nature does not admit of much fertility in the soil. It is a country which has hitherto been but very little known, and which therefore presents a wide field for geographical and scientific research.

Thus both the Tibetan and Chinese sources speak of the great barrenness of the elevated regions in Tibet and state that the mountains are destitute of vegetation. In CSOMA'S report northern Tibet is described as a desert. At this epoch and even many years later a great uncertainty prevailed amongst European geographers regarding the morphology and nature of Tibet, more especially its northern parts. When Csoma writes: »From the first range of the Himalaya Mountains on the Indian side to the plains of Tartary, the Tibetans count six chains of mountains»¹ he seems to mean that the highlands of Tibet slowly go over into the plains of Tartary. Three of these ranges were placed south of the Indus-Tsangpo valley, the fourth must be the Transhimalaya. It is extremely unlikely that the fifth and sixth should be the Kara-korum and Kwen-lun. In spite of his deep erudition Csoma could hardly know anything about this complicated orography which was so vividly discussed by British geographers even some forty years later. Father HYACINTH BITCHURIN, who also was a very learned man, speaks of Northern Tibet as a steppe-land. In his *Ancient History of Tibet and Koko-nor* he has a short reference to Khotan where he says:

¹ Cf. Vol. III, p 72 *supra*.