

INTRODUCTION

THE chronicles of Ladakh (*La-dvags*), which are here for the first time edited and translated in their full extent, comprise in their earlier parts the history of the ancient empire of Great Tibet and in their more recent parts that of the West Tibetan empire. But even in the chapters dealing with the history of Great Tibet special attention is shown to Western Tibet; and these chapters do not appear to be mere extracts from general Tibetan works of history. On the contrary, they appear to be an original production, which had its origin in the west of the country.

The first European to hear of the existence of a continuous historical narrative in Western Tibet was Csoma de Körös, who lived in Zañs-dkar and Upper Kunawar between A.D. 1820 and 1830. He says in a note appended to his list of Tibetan kings (Prinsep's *Useful Tables*, p. 132) that there was a book at Leh containing the names of the kings who successively reigned in that principality (Ladakh). But Csoma was never able to see the book.

Csoma's statement was questioned by Sir Alexander Cunningham, who visited Ladakh in A.D. 1846-7. He says that from Dpal-gyi-mgon (tenth century) down to the end of the sixteenth century no historical records exist in Ladakh. This he explains in the following way:—'During the invasion of Ladakh by Ali-Mir, the Mohamedan chief of Skardo (sixteenth century), all the temples and monasteries of the country are said to have been destroyed, and their libraries thrown into the Indus.' Cunningham, however, managed to see historical books containing the history of Ladakh from c. A.D. 1580 down to the Dogra wars (A.D. 1834). These chapters were apparently translated for him into Urdu, and he wrote down in English what he was told. This method explains a number of blunders found in Cunningham's chapter 'Under Native Rulers'. But a comparison of his account with that of the chronicles, as we have them now, plainly proves that his information was drawn from original documents.

The first to bring a copy of such an original document to Europe was Hermann v. Schlagintweit, who visited Leh in 1856. It was a copy specially prepared for him, executed by three lamas, but not until valuable presents had been given to the ex-king, Hjigs-med-rnam-rgyal. This copy was published by Emil v. Schlagintweit, with a German translation, in *Abhandlungen der kgl. bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, vol. x, 1866.

A copy of the *La-dvags-rgyal-rabs*, very similar to that of Schlagintweit, must have been in the hands of the Rev. H. A. Jäschke when he made his collections of Tibetan words for his Tibetan-English dictionary. Many of the words and passages