

## NOTE ON A PORTION OF THE TSANGPO

Major F. M. Bailey, C.I.E.

IN returning from a short visit to Lhasa in the summer of 1924 with Major Hislop of the Indian Medical Service, I had an opportunity of using a little-known road and also of completing by a rough prismatic compass traverse the survey of about 50 miles of the Tsangpo between the point our surveyors were able to map during Sir Francis Young-husband's Mission in 1904, and Tsetang, the point up to which Major Morshead surveyed it in 1913.\*

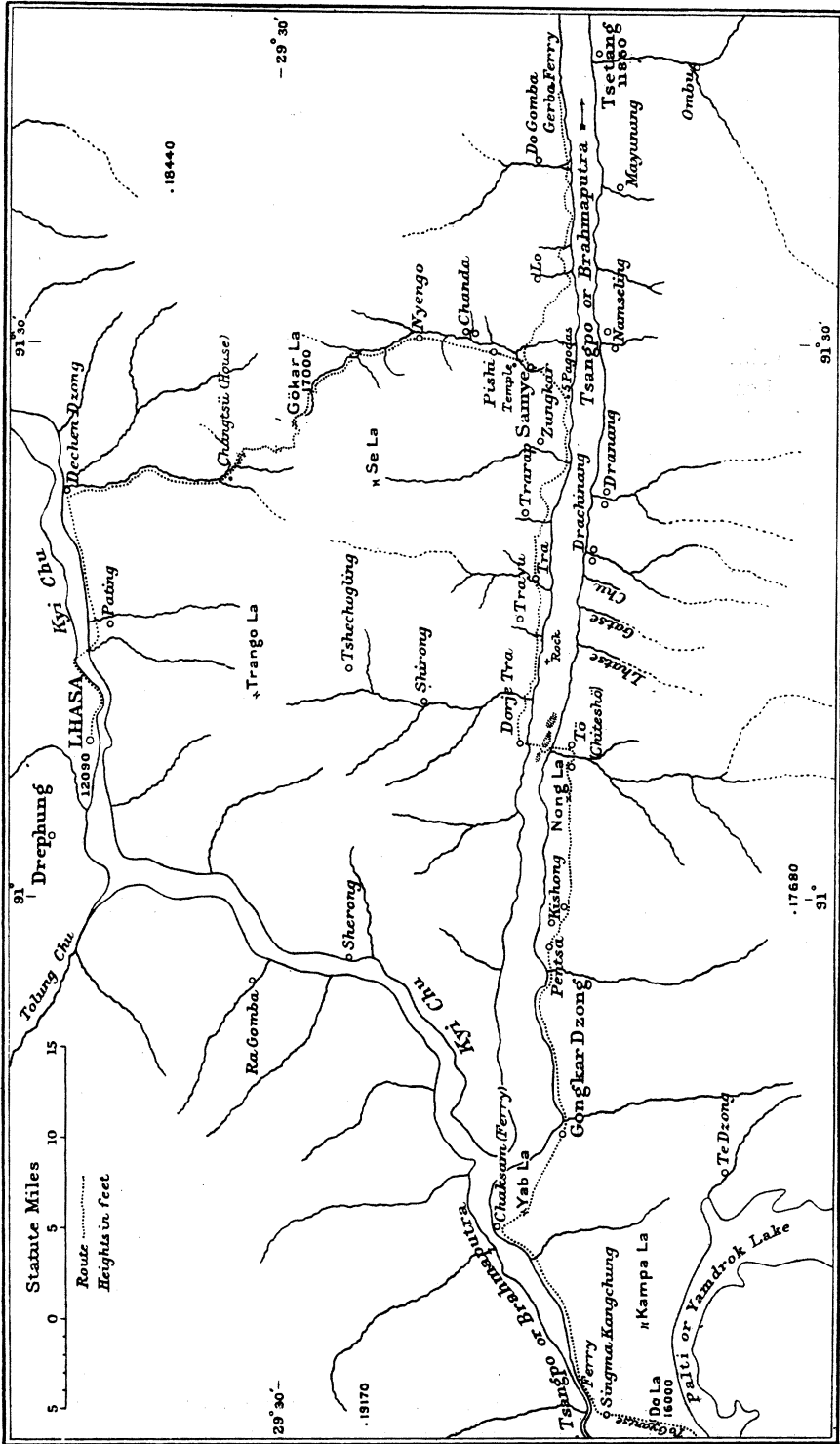
Leaving Lhasa on August 16, we travelled up the right bank of the Kyi Chu for some 4 miles, when the river was crossed to the left bank in skin coracles. The river was in heavy flood and was dangerous for ponies, which were obliged to swim. The ponies are held up and guided by men who cross in the coracle. One of my best ponies, well known in the Darjeeling racecourse, got loose and was nearly drowned, but managed to get on to a shoal in mid-stream, where he stood until rescued.

We left the valley of the Kyi Chu near Dechen Dzong, and going south up a valley, we camped under a cypress tree at a house called Changtsü. The next day we crossed the Gökar La ("White Vulture Pass") at an altitude of 17,000 feet. On the road were wonderful primulas, presumably wild hybrids, for in one clump they were to be found of every colour from pure white, through yellow to deep crimson, the most striking being a clear grey. Other beautiful flowers were blue larkspurs of several varieties, some large-flowered ones being near the summit of the pass among patches of snow. We also passed fine but deadly aconites and patches of yellow and crimson pedicularis and a yellow clematis which is common at Lhasa.

At the pass we entered the valley of a stream which flows into the Tsangpo. As we descended the valley the forest became thicker and thicker, and we were told that it contained stags, leopards, and Harman's pheasants, though travelling down the road we saw no signs of these. To judge by the vegetation, it would seem that the valleys joining the Tsangpo receive a much larger quantity of rain than the actual Tsangpo itself. In 1913 we noticed houses with pent roofs of pine shingles within a few miles of the dry valley where all houses had the usual flat mud roof of Tibet.

A march of 22 miles from Changtsü brought us to Samye. This is an ancient and famous monastery connected with the visit of Guru Rimpoche (the Indian saint, Padma Sambhava), who converted Tibet and Bhutan to Buddhism in the eighth century. On the hill above is a hermitage in which he lived for some time. I said I had not time to visit it, and was

\* Note by Ed. G. Ƴ. The explorer A. K. had of course traversed and roughly mapped the whole of this section on the southern bank in 1882.



Sketch-map of a part of the Tsangpo to illustrate Major Bailey's note.



THE TSANGPO, LOOKING UPSTREAM FROM NEAR SAMYE



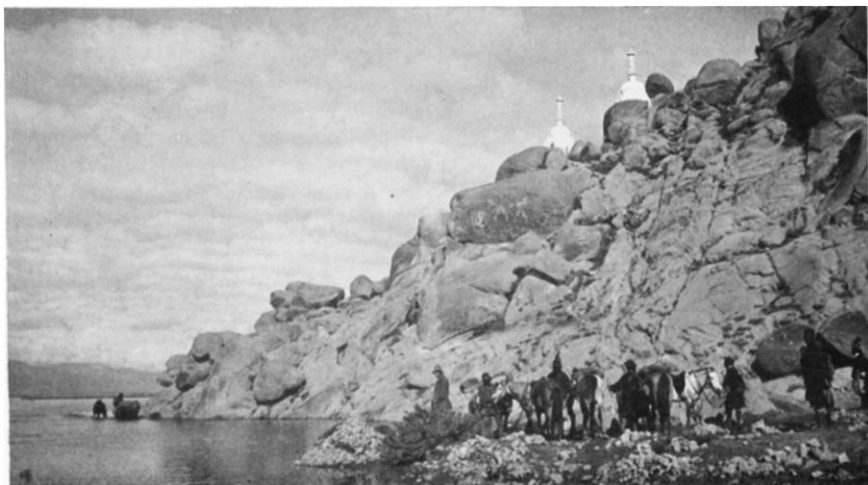
SAND-DUNES NEAR SAMYE



CAMP OPPOSITE TSETANG



THE TSANGPO, LOOKING UPSTREAM FROM BELOW DORJE TRA



ROAD THROUGH RIVER BELOW GURU RIMPOCHE'S FINGERS



THE TSANGPO, LOOKING DOWNSTREAM FROM NONG LA

told that to visit Samye without visiting the hermits' caves was like buying a coat without a collar.

The main temple is in three stories supposed to be in Chinese, Tibetan, and Indian styles. At each corner is a coloured *chorten*, or pagoda, white for good, black for evil, red for fire, and green for water. The whole is surrounded by an oval wall on which are a thousand *chortens*. There is one temple into which the breath of every person who dies in the whole world passes at the time of death. The small cross-pieces of the roof are all swords and spears—there must be thousands of them—while outside are three swords each 25 feet long.

A day's journey down the Tsangpo over miles of tiresome sand-dunes brought us opposite to the important town of Tsetang, which Major Morshead and I had visited in 1913. The river was so high that no boat could cross to reach us, and we had to spend an uncomfortable night on a bare hillside with no food for our animals, while across the river, tantalizingly near, was the town among willow trees and crops.

Being unable to cross the river, we were obliged to return up the left bank, an unpleasant, hot march over sand. In winter the road is easier, as it goes over the river-bed instead of over sand-dunes.

We spent a night at Samye, and then continued our march up the left bank.

Soon after leaving Samye we passed five white *chortens* on a rocky spur which ran down to the river's bank. About these we were told the following legend: Guru Rimpoche was coming to Samye, and at this point the king of Tibet met him. At the meeting the king said, "As I am king of the country no one is greater than I," and he refused to salute the holy man. Guru Rimpoche said, "I am a saint, and so superior to all mortals," and he refused to salute the king. Being angry with the king for his arrogance, he produced fire from his five fingertips and burnt up the king's clothing. The now naked king fell down and worshipped him, saying, "You are indeed a god." Guru Rimpoche was then filled with remorse at his own display of pride and anger, and as a penance he erected the five white *chortens*, one for each of his fingers out of which he had produced the fire.

Our road was much the same as before: stretches of sand alternating with rocky spurs or steep sand-banks jutting into the river.

About 13 miles from Samye we came to a village called Tra, where the eye was relieved by green crops and willow groves. The hills up the valley appeared to be thickly wooded, and were, we were told, the haunts of Harman's pheasants. Five miles farther we passed a very striking conical rock sticking up in the river, which formed a very useful landmark. It was said to have been floating down to India, but was stopped by Guru Rimpoche. About 5 miles farther we reached the monastery of Dorje Tra, built against a cliff, where we spent the night. This is an important ferry where there was one wooden and several skin

boats. We ourselves crossed in leather boats; the crossing took one and a half hours. When nearing the south bank we had to work our way through many sandy islands, which delayed us. In winter these islands are part of a wide stretch of sand, and the crossing is much shorter. We made a delightful camp on turf under willows at the village at Tö, or Chi-te Shö. The people had never seen a European, and were very curious to see what we were like.

Our ponies were crossing in a wooden boat, which had to go for a long way down and be pulled up past the islands to the end of the Nong La spur, which was the only place where they could be landed. They did not reach there till the next day.

On August 22 we marched 20 miles up the south bank to Gongkar Dzong. From a spur of the Nong La, 400 feet above the river, we had splendid views of the broad valley both up and down stream. We descended and continued up the flat valley. There were numbers of Bar-headed geese on the river-bank, which were so tame that I was able to get some photographs of them.

The next day I visited the Dzongpen of Gongkar. In 1904 he had been one of the Garpons, the officials at the Gartok trade mart in Western Tibet. We had met when I went there with the late General Rawling, Colonel Ryder, and Colonel Wood of the Survey of India.

Six miles from Gongkar we crossed the Yab La, a spur about 500 feet above the river. At the end of this spur is the ferry of Chaksam, where the expedition under Sir Francis Younghusband crossed the Tsangpo in 1904. We were now on well-known ground. We camped the night at Singma Kangchung, whence we telephoned to His Holiness the Dalai Lama to tell him we had rejoined the main road.

When in Lhasa the Tsarong Shape had asked me about the possibility of using motor boats on the Tsangpo, and at his request I measured the velocity as well as I could in some of the more rapid places and found it to be between 5 and 6 miles an hour.

We returned to Gyantse by the usual road *via* Nangartse, the Karo La, and Ralung.

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## THE ROUNA FALLS OF PAPUA

T. J. Lindsay Dowsett

SOME 23 miles from Port Moresby, the seat of Government in the Territory of Papua, are the Rouna Falls,\* which for beauty, picturesque surroundings, and prospects of immediate economic

\* We retain the spelling used by Mr. Dowsett, which is that usually adopted on maps. It does not seem certain however whether the vowel sound in the first syllable is diphthongal ("Ro-una") or whether "Rona" or "Runa" would be the correct spelling according to the R.G.S. system.