

nothing but sand. After these sandy plains one enters great arid mountains, which in his own opinion, ought to contain minerals. The informant added that these mountains must be the Imaus of the ancients, separating High Asia from Low Asia, and that in them are to be found serpents of a prodigious size. After crossing these mountains, one comes, as asserted by a Tartar merchant, to another desert of 20 days' march. One must be armed when travelling in these regions, for the Tartar nomads living in the neighbourhood have mastiff dogs, the most furious and cruel in the world, and more like wolves than dogs.

Here at last we suspect Tibet. The Imaus, Himalaya, may indeed be said to serve as a boundary between High Asia and the Indian plains. Tibet, the conception of which, in spite of d'Andrade's journey, is still very vague, is regarded as a part of Tartary, as was sometimes the case even 200 years later. The Caucasus and Paropamisus are identified with the mountains of Nagrakot and Ussonte, which indeed are the same as Himalaya, and in them the Indus and Ganges have their sources near each other. But on the other hand, the Imaus separates high and low Asia. To the geographers of 1649 the whole country north of India must have appeared as an inextricable labyrinth. So far le Blanc's narrative is interesting as it comes in between the great Tibetan travellers Andrade and Grueber, and in some respects his general geography has a certain resemblance to reality.<sup>1</sup>

During his several journeys in India TAVERNIER certainly paid more attention to pearls and jewels than to mountains and rivers, and if he gives us a glimpse of geography, especially of the scarcely known country to the north, it is always in connection with trade and merchandise. Thus he tells us that the best sort and the greatest quantity of musk comes from the Kingdom of Boutan,<sup>2</sup> and again, in his observations on the commerce of India, he mentions the trade in musk, and says that Boutan is beyond the Ganges towards the north.<sup>3</sup> In another place<sup>4</sup> he says that Boutan is north of Bengal. In the chapter entitled: *«Du Royaume de Boutan d'où viennent le musc, la bonne rhubarbe, & quelques fourrures»*,<sup>5</sup> he really gives us a

<sup>1</sup> Le Blanc has been quoted in contemporary books as an authority on the Ganges, for instance, in ABRAHAM ROGER'S *»Offne Thür zu dem verborgenen Heydenthum: oder Wahrhaftige Vorweisung des Lebens und Sittens samt der Religion und Gottesdienst der Bramines auf der Cust Chormandel . . .»* etc. Nürnberg 1663, where we read, p. 825, le Blanc's views regarding the source of the Ganges: *»Solcher Fluss hat seinen Ursprung aus den Bergen dess hochgelegenen Indien nicht weit von dem Fluss Indo selbst.»* P. 427 *ibidem*, the old legend is told of the sacred Ganga coming from Vishnu's foot, a story that ends with the following words: *»Hie hat nun der Leser die Ursach der grossen Heiligkeit dess Flusses Ganga, und warum solcher in so grossem Ansehen und Würden sey? Nemlich dieweil er, ihrem Vorgeben nach, von demjenigen Wasser, das Gott selbst ist; und weil er sich von dem Himmel hernieder gelassen: Wesswegen sie auch denselbigen einen himmlischen Fluss nennen.»*

<sup>2</sup> *Les six voyages de Jean-Baptiste Tavernier . . . en Turquie, en Perse, et aux Indes.* Paris 1681, p. 316.

<sup>3</sup> *Suite des Voyages de M. Tavernier . . .* p. 131.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibidem* p. 134. In these two places he writes Boutam.

<sup>5</sup> *Les six voyages . . .* p. 379 et seq.